



TRIO Programs in Florida

2026

For more than 60 years, federally funded TRIO programs have helped millions of low-income and first-generation students access and complete college. In Florida, 111 TRIO programs serve more than 33,000 students annually, representing nearly \$30 million in federal investment flowing to communities across the state.

In 2025, these programs faced unprecedented challenges — from proposed elimination in the federal budget to grant cancellations and the near-total loss of federal oversight staff. Congress ultimately maintained funding, but significant uncertainty remains.

This report provides a comprehensive overview of the TRIO programs, their proven impact, their presence across Florida, and the political and policy developments that will shape their future.

For a detailed timeline of 2025 events, read our companion blog post at FloridaCollegeAccess.org/News.

WHAT IS TRIO?

TRIO is a set of federally funded programs that help disadvantaged students prepare for, enroll in, and graduate from college or graduate school. For more than 60 years, TRIO has served low-income students, first-generation college students, and students with special needs – including veterans and students with disabilities – from middle school through graduate school.

TRIO refers to the three original federal programs created to increase access to higher education for economically disadvantaged students: Upward Bound, Talent Search, and Student Support Services. Upward Bound was created by the 1964 Economic Opportunity Act as part of President Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty. The 1965 Higher Education Act created Talent Search, and in 1968, Student Support Services followed. Together, the three became known as "TRIO" – and the name stuck as the collection grew.

Over time, TRIO expanded to include four additional student-serving programs: Veterans Upward Bound, Educational Opportunity Centers, the Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program, and Upward Bound Math/Science. An eighth program provides training for TRIO project staff.

HOW IS TRIO FUNDED?

The U.S. Congress allocates over \$1 billion annually to fund TRIO programs. TRIO programs assist over 800,000 disadvantaged students each year. Traditionally administered by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Postsecondary Education, TRIO provides over 3,000 competitive grants to organizations across all 50 states. TRIO grant competitions are held every five years (on a staggered basis) for the seven TRIO programs that serve students, and grants are awarded for a period of five years. Grantees are primarily colleges, with some school districts and nonprofit organizations also receiving grants.

What Do the Eight TRIO Programs Do?

● Upward Bound

Upward Bound helps low income and first-generation high school students prepare for higher education. The goal of Upward Bound is to increase the rate at which participants complete high school, enroll in, and graduate from postsecondary institutions. Upward Bound projects provide a variety of services, including:

- Academic instruction in mathematics, laboratory sciences, composition, literature, and foreign languages
- Tutoring, counseling, and mentoring
- Cultural enrichment
- Work-study programs
- Financial and economic literacy

Programs are also designed to serve the needs of specific disadvantaged student populations, such as limited English proficient students, students from groups that are traditionally underrepresented in postsecondary education, students with disabilities, homeless students, students who are in foster care or are aging out of the foster care system, and disconnected youth.

● Upward Bound Math/Science

The Upward Bound Math and Science program is designed to strengthen the math and science skills of participating students. The goal of the program is to help students recognize and develop their potential to excel in math and science and to encourage them to pursue postsecondary degrees in math and science, ultimately leading to careers in the STEM professions. Additional program services include summer programs with intensive math and science training, exposure to university faculty members who do research in mathematics and the sciences, and participant-conducted scientific research under the guidance of faculty members or graduate students who serve as mentors.

● Veterans Upward Bound

Veterans Upward Bound is designed to motivate and help veterans develop academic and other skills needed to succeed in postsecondary education. Participating veterans, after an assessment process, are supported with counseling, mentoring, tutoring, and academic instruction in core subject areas.

All Veterans Upward Bound projects provide instruction in mathematics through pre-calculus, laboratory science, foreign language, composition, and literature. They also assist veterans in securing support services from the Veterans Administration, state veterans agencies, veterans associations, and other state and local agencies that serve veterans. Projects may also provide short-term remedial or refresher courses for veterans who are high school graduates but have delayed pursuing a postsecondary education.

● Talent Search

Talent Search programs help young people in grades six through 12 better understand their educational opportunities and options. The goal of Talent Search is to increase the number of youth from disadvantaged backgrounds who graduate from high school, enroll in, and complete a postsecondary education. The program provides academic, career, and financial counseling to its participants and encourages them to graduate from high school and continue on to, and complete, their postsecondary education. The program informs students and families about the availability of financial aid and assists participants with the postsecondary application process. Talent Search also encourages those who have not completed high school or college to complete their educations.

● Student Support Services (SSS)

SSS programs help eligible students stay in college until they earn their degrees. The goal of SSS is to increase the college retention and graduation rates of participating students. Funds are awarded to higher education institutions to provide opportunities for academic development, assist students with basic college requirements, and to motivate students toward the successful completion of their postsecondary educations. Some SSS projects provide grant aid to participants who receive federal Pell grants.

What Do the Eight TRIO Programs Do?

● Education Opportunity Centers (EOC)

The Education Opportunity Centers program was created to serve displaced or under-employed workers by helping them to choose a college and secure financial aid. The goal of the EOC program is to increase the number of adult participants who enroll in postsecondary education institutions.

EOC provides services to improve the financial and economic literacy of participants. An important objective of the program is to counsel participants on financial aid options, including basic financial planning skills, and to assist in the financial aid application process. Programming can also include:

- Academic advice
- Personal counseling
- Career workshops
- Information on postsecondary education opportunities and student financial assistance
- Help in completing applications for college admissions, testing, and financial aid
- Coordination with nearby postsecondary institutions
- Media activities designed to involve and acquaint the community with higher education opportunities
- Tutoring
- Mentoring
- Education or counseling services to improve financial and economic literacy

● Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program

The McNair program was designed to encourage students to consider careers in college teaching as well as prepare for doctoral study. The program was named after African American scientist Ronald McNair, who died aboard the space shuttle Challenger when it was destroyed shortly after launch in 1986.

The McNair program serves participants from disadvantaged backgrounds who demonstrate strong academic potential. Institutions work closely with participants as they complete their undergraduate requirements, encourage them to enroll in graduate programs, then track their progress through completion of advanced degrees.

All McNair projects provide opportunities for research or other scholarly activities; summer internships; seminars and other educational activities designed to prepare students for doctoral study; and activities designed to assist students in securing admission to and financial assistance for enrollment in graduate programs.

McNair projects may also provide education or counseling services to improve financial and economic literacy; mentoring programs involving faculty members at institutions of higher education; and exposure to cultural events and academic programs not usually available to disadvantaged students.

● Training for Federal TRIO Programs

Federal TRIO program training enhances the skills and expertise of project directors and staff employed in the Federal TRIO Programs. Trainings may include conferences, seminars, internships, workshops, or the publication of manuals.

Training is carried out in regions across the country to ensure that growth opportunities are available to all TRIO personnel. Training can cover a variety of topics, including legislative and regulatory requirements; assisting students in receiving adequate financial aid; the design and operation of model programs; the use of appropriate educational technology; and strategies for recruiting and serving hard-to-reach populations.

TRIO's Impact on College Access & Success

Since their inception, TRIO programs have helped more than 6 million Americans earn college degrees.

UPWARD BOUND

2X

more likely to earn a bachelor's degree by age 24 for Upward Bound students than peers in the nation's poorest households

74%

of Upward Bound students enroll in college immediately after high school, compared with only 56% in the bottom income quartile

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

48%

more likely to complete a degree or transfer to a four-year institution for SSS participants than comparable peers

13:1

return on investment for the Student Support Services program, according to the Council for Opportunity in Education

FLORIDA TALENT SEARCH

58%

more likely to apply for financial aid than peers in a control group, and 42% more likely to immediately enroll in a Florida public college

TRIO Programs in Florida

For more than 50 years, Florida colleges, universities, and nonprofits have hosted TRIO programs that have helped generations of disadvantaged Floridians access and complete college. During the 2024–2025 fiscal year, Florida institutions managed 111 TRIO programs serving more than 33,000 students, representing nearly \$30 million in federal investment.

Most Florida TRIO programs are hosted by Florida College System (FCS) and State University System (SUS) institutions, though not all currently participate.

Florida Program	# Grants	# Participants	Funding	Cost Per Student Served
Upward Bound	24	1,680	\$4.8M	\$2,844
Upward Bound Math/Science	8	512	\$2.5M	\$4,925
Upward Bound Veterans	3	380	\$918K	\$2,416
Student Support Services	39	6,185	\$11.8M	\$1,911
Talent Search	22	11,997	\$6.2M	\$515
Educational Opportunity Centers	12	12,246	\$3.1M	\$252
McNair	3	81	\$837K	\$1,036
TOTAL	111	33,081	\$30.1M	

Organizations Supporting TRIO in Florida

Several organizations support TRIO programs and the professionals who run them at the national, regional, and state levels.

Council for Opportunity in Education



National nonprofit established in 1981 with more than 1,000 member institutions and agencies. COE provides training and services to TRIO staff, advocates for program funding, and produces research supporting college access for low-income, first-generation, and disabled students across all 50 states, Washington, D.C., the Pacific Islands, and Puerto Rico.

Florida TRIO



A statewide volunteer organization of TRIO institutional grant recipients and service providers. Florida TRIO offers members free webinars, discounts to trainings and conferences, networking opportunities, and scholarship opportunities for the students they serve.

Southeastern Association of Educational Opportunity Program Personnel



A regional nonprofit serving TRIO professionals across eight southeastern states: Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. SAEOPP supports members through professional development, education, and advocacy for TRIO programs.

Challenges Facing TRIO Programs

2017–2020

TRIO programs have faced growing scrutiny in recent years, beginning during the first Trump administration. In **2017**, the administration proposed a combined \$193 million cut to TRIO and GEAR UP, representing 10% of the TRIO budget and nearly one-third of GEAR UP funding. The budget stated cuts would affect "areas that have limited evidence on the overall effectiveness for improving student outcomes." Congress rejected the proposed cuts and instead allocated an additional \$67 million for the programs.

In **2018**, the administration proposed restructuring TRIO from a competitive federal grant program to a state block grant formula program and eliminating GEAR UP entirely. Congress did not act on these changes. Think tanks including Brookings and the New America Foundation have also called for consolidating TRIO and GEAR UP or tightening criteria for grants.

2020 GAO Report

In 2020, the Government Accountability Office issued a report titled "Department of Education Should Further Assess College Access Grant Programs." Key findings included:

Experience points favor longtime grantees. In fiscal years 2015–2017, returning applicants received 79% of grant awards. 93% of returning applicants won grants compared to only 26% of new applicants. Had experience points not been factored in, the number of new grantees would have almost doubled.

Grantee institutions enrolled target populations at below-average rates. The median proportion of Pell Grant recipients at TRIO grantee colleges was 35%, below the national median of 46%. The median proportion of first-generation students was 41%, compared to 48% nationally.

Insufficient verification of reported results. Grantees are evaluated on self-reported data with few quality checks, creating a structural incentive for misreporting. The department has never assessed the effectiveness of Veterans Upward Bound, Educational Opportunity Centers, or the McNair program.

The report recommended that the department take additional steps to ensure data reliability and develop a plan for assessing program effectiveness. It is unclear whether any action was taken on these recommendations.

Challenges Facing TRIO Programs: Part 2

2025–Present

The administration’s FY 2026 budget proposed eliminating all TRIO and GEAR UP funding – approximately \$1.2 billion. The stated rationale was that “access to college is not the obstacle that it was for students of limited means” and that TRIO is “a relic of the past.”

However, TRIO has legislative champions on both sides of the aisle. Maine Sen. Susan Collins led a forceful defense, and Congress voted to maintain funding at FY 2025 levels. Despite level funding, TRIO programs faced significant operational disruptions throughout 2025.

“Access to college is not the obstacle that it was for students of limited means. TRIO is a relic of the past.”

FY 2026
Budget Justification

September 2025

An estimated \$660 million in TRIO grant funds were frozen weeks before the new fiscal year, causing some programs to cease services and furlough staff. After broad pushback, the funds were eventually released.

Roughly 120 TRIO grants were cancelled or rejected. The Department cited grantees' references to diversity, equity, and inclusion-related goals in their applications.

October 2025

Nearly all federal staff overseeing TRIO were laid off. The Student Services division of the Office of Postsecondary Education was cut from approximately 40 staffers to two or three.

November 2025

The Department of Education announced an interagency agreement transferring administration of most postsecondary education programs – including TRIO – to the Department of Labor.

December 2025

The Council for Opportunity in Education, joined by 21 states and Washington, D.C., filed suit opposing the cuts. A motion for preliminary injunction is pending.

FCAN continues to monitor developments impacting TRIO programs and will report on new developments throughout 2026.

About This Report

This report was produced by the Florida College Access Network (FCAN). FCAN is Florida's collaborative network committed to ensuring all Floridians have the opportunity to achieve an education beyond high school toward a rewarding career. We envision a Florida working together where education is the pathway to economic mobility for all. FCAN strives to expand knowledge of research, data, policies, and practices that impact postsecondary access and attainment in Florida.

Because TRIO programs serve tens of thousands of Florida students annually, FCAN tracks developments affecting these programs as part of our commitment to supporting college access statewide.

Related Resources

- For a detailed timeline of 2025 TRIO developments, read our companion blog post at www.FloridaCollegeAccess.org/News.



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FCAN is a statewide independent organization hosted by the University of South Florida (USF). The statements and positions presented are those of FCAN and are not made on behalf of the USF Board of Trustees or intended in any way to be representative of USF.

APPENDIX

Florida TRIO Grantee Directory, FY 2024–2025

The following tables list all Florida TRIO grantees for fiscal year 2024–2025, including host institutions, participants served, and annual award amounts. *Some institutions appear more than once because they hold multiple TRIO grants for the same program, each serving distinct student populations or campuses.*

Upward Bound Grants

24 programs | 15 host institutions | 1,680 participants | \$4.8 million in grant funding

Institution	Participants	Annual Award
Edward Waters University	67	\$324,979
Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University	65	\$279,823
Florida Atlantic University	60	\$299,038
Florida Atlantic University	65	\$324,979
Florida International University	82	\$419,617
Florida State University	60	\$299,038
Florida State University	60	\$299,038
Florida State University	60	\$299,038
Florida State University	80	\$430,148
Gulf Coast State College	68	\$309,505
Indian River State College	74	\$374,222
Indian River State College	67	\$324,979
LULAC National Educational Service Centers, Inc./Miami	58	\$309,505

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Florida TRIO Grantee Directory, FY 2024–2025

Upward Bound Grants, continued

24 programs | 15 host institutions | 1,680 participants | \$4.8 million in grant funding

Institution	Participants	Annual Award
Miami Dade College/Homestead	60	\$309,505
Miami Dade College/North	60	\$309,505
Miami Dade College/Wolfson	60	\$308,836
Florida Atlantic University	65	\$324,979
Palm Beach Community College	65	\$324,979
Palm Beach State College	60	\$299,038
Polk State College	72	\$324,947
Polk State College	72	\$309,505
Rollins College/Hamilton Holt School	72	\$387,434
Santa Fe College	63	\$343,441
University of Central Florida	60	\$309,505
University of Central Florida	60	\$309,505
University of South Florida/Tampa	170	\$857,266

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Florida TRIO Grantee Directory, FY 2024–2025

Upward Bound Math/Science Grants

8 programs | 8 host institutions | 512 participants | \$2.5 million in grant funding

Institution	Participants	Annual Award
Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University	70	\$355,330
Florida Atlantic University	70	\$309,505
Florida International University	60	\$309,459
Florida State University	60	\$299,038
Indian River State College	67	\$324,979
Phillip and Patricia Frost Museum of Science, Inc.	65	\$324,978
University of Florida	60	\$299,038

Veterans Upward Bound Grants

3 programs | 3 host institutions | 380 participants | \$918,048 in grant funding

Institution	Participants	Annual Award
Pensacola State College	130	\$309,505
Florida State College/Jacksonville	125	\$299,038
Miami Dade College	125	\$309,505

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Florida TRIO Grantee Directory, FY 2024–2025

Student Support Services Grants

39 programs | 26 host institutions | 6,185 participants | \$11.8 million in grant funding

Institution	Participants	Annual Award
St. Petersburg College	167	\$348,514
Broward College	140	\$272,364
Broward College	100	\$272,364
Broward College/A. Hugh Adams	140	\$272,364
Broward College/Judson A. Samuels	140	\$272,364
Chipola College	144	\$272,364
College of Central Florida	227	\$391,142
Daytona State College	210	\$389,552
Eastern Florida State College	235	\$352,528
Edward Waters College	165	\$286,109
Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University	250	\$384,463
Florida Gateway College	140	\$272,364
Florida Gulf Coast University	165	\$306,514
Florida Gulf Coast University	124	\$263,920
Florida International University	165	\$272,364

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Florida TRIO Grantee Directory, FY 2024–2025

Student Support Services Grants, continued

39 programs 26 host institutions 6,185 participants \$11.8 million in grant funding		
Institution	Participants	Annual Award
Florida State College/Jacksonville	160	\$272,364
Florida State University	140	\$272,364
Florida State University	140	\$272,364
Gulf Coast State College	196	\$307,474
Broward College/Health Sciences Pathway	120	\$272,364
Hillsborough Community College	206	\$383,366
Indian River State College	160	\$348,515
Miami Dade College/Homestead	140	\$272,364
Miami Dade College/North	172	\$285,878
Palm Beach State College	175	\$306,514
Palm Beach State College	120	\$272,364
Pensacola State College	120	\$272,364
Polk State College	161	\$272,364
Santa Fe College	206	\$348,515
Santa Fe College	120	\$272,364
Santa Fe College	120	\$272,364
State College of Florida/Manatee-Sarasota	140	\$272,364
University of Central Florida	124	\$272,364

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Florida TRIO Grantee Directory, FY 2024–2025

Student Support Services Grants, continued

39 programs 26 host institutions 6,185 participants \$11.8 million in grant funding		
Institution	Participants	Annual Award
University of Central Florida	144	\$272,364
University of Florida	120	\$272,364
University of South Florida/Tampa	220	\$358,700
University of West Florida	200	\$361,741

Talent Search Grants

22 programs 17 host institutions 11,997 participants \$6.2 million in grant funding		
Institution	Participants	Annual Award
Broward College	500	\$288,470
Broward College	500	\$288,470
College Bound Institute	550	\$288,470
Daytona State College	500	\$288,470
Pensacola State College	714	\$411,936

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Florida TRIO Grantee Directory, FY 2024–2025

Talent Search Grants, continued

22 programs | 17 host institutions | 11,997 participants | \$6.2 million in grant funding

Institution	Participants	Annual Award
Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University	500	\$288,470
Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University	776	\$447,706
Florida Atlantic University	500	\$288,470
Florida Gulf Coast University	500	\$288,470
Florida State College/Jacksonville	500	\$288,470
Florida State College/Jacksonville	500	\$288,470
Florida State University	500	\$288,470
Indian River State College	600	\$344,069
Indian River State College	500	\$288,470
Lake Sumter State College	612	\$353,088
Miami Dade College/North	500	\$288,470
Palm Beach State College	500	\$288,470
Palm Beach State College	500	\$288,080
Polk State College	565	\$325,318
Santa Fe College	680	\$392,320
Tallahassee State College	500	\$288,470
Florida International University	500	\$288,470

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Florida TRIO Grantee Directory, FY 2024–2025

Educational Opportunity Centers (EOC) Grants

12 programs | 11 host institutions | 12,246 participants | \$3 million in grant funding

Institution	Participants	Annual Award
St. Petersburg College	850	\$288,470
Broward College	1,000	\$288,470
College of Central Florida	1,265	\$425,550
Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University	1,000	\$283,663
Florida State College/Jacksonville	850	\$241,332
Gulf Coast State College	1,000	\$283,663
Indian River State College	850	\$241,332
Miami Dade College/InterAmerican	1,000	\$284,745
Palm Beach State College	1,000	\$283,663
Palm Beach State College	1,000	\$284,745
Pensacola State College	1,456	\$485,066
Seminole State College of Florida	975	\$276,822

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Florida TRIO Grantee Directory, FY 2024–2025

McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Grants

3 programs 3 host institutions 81 participants \$836,897 in grant funding		
Institution	Participants	Annual Award
Florida International University	27	\$285,978
University of Central Florida	29	\$278,555
University of Florida	25	\$272,364

Training for Federal TRIO Programs

3 programs 3 host institutions 81 participants \$836,897 in grant funding
College Bound Institute was awarded two grants of \$309,905 and \$402,357 to train 231 and 300 TRIO staff, respectively.