

2-13-2007

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Jody Record
UNH Media Relations

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Recommended Citation

Record, Jody, "National Trio Day Allows The University Of New Hampshire To Tout Its Programs" (2007). *UNH Today*. 647.
<https://scholars.unh.edu/news/647>

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National Trio Day Allows The University Of New Hampshire To Tout Its Programs

Contact: [Jody Record](#)
603-862-1462
UNH Media Relations

February 13, 2007

DURHAM, N.H. -- President Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty helped launch a series of programs aimed at helping low-income students overcome the other barriers besides money that keep them from going to college.

Since 1984, the national TRIO programs—named for the original three—have held annual celebrations around the country. Next weekend, on Feb. 23 and 24, the regional celebration of National Trio Day will take place in Nashua.

Currently there are eight TRIO programs operating throughout New Hampshire serving about 2,000 students and bringing in \$2.7 million. The UNH programs include two pre-collegiate initiatives: Educational Talent Search, for 6 through 12 graders, and Upward Bound, which serves 9 through 12 grade students. Once a student is at UNH, Student Support Services takes over. That program helps low-income and disabled students stay in school until they earn their degree by providing tutoring, counseling and remedial instruction.

The event is being sponsored by the New England Educational Opportunity Association (NEOA) and the New Hampshire Educational Opportunity Association (NHEOA). Len Lamberti, director of the Center for Academic Resources and TRIO Student Support Services at the University of New Hampshire, is president of NHEOA. Debbie McCann of UNH's Educational Talent Search is co-chairman of the event.

"The first TRIO Day in New England was on the UNH campus," McCann says. "Now it rotates year to year among the New England states."

High school students come from all across the region for what may be their first introduction to college life. When they arrive on Friday, they will immediately board one of 13 buses bound for a New Hampshire university or college. Nearly 700 have registered; about 100 are set to visit Durham where they will get a tour of campus and then eat in Holloway Commons.

On Saturday, 10 different workshops will address such issues as leadership, goal setting, financial aid, personal finances, and writing a college essay. There will also be a college fair with information on more than 80 schools.

"All of the workshops are about promoting access to higher education," Lamberti says. "Educational opportunities: those are the key words."

Additionally, the students will participate in community service, making fleece blankets for Project Linus, a non-profit organization that provides handmade blankets to sick or traumatized children. The blankets will be donated to local fire departments.

The students will also have the chance to write letters or send emails to their Congressional representatives, telling them about the importance of the TRIO programs, which are funded under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965.

"We're trying to do a lot of role modeling," Lamberti says.

A fourth New Hampshire initiative, the Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement program, encourages low-income students and minority undergraduates to consider careers in college teaching and also prepares them for doctoral study. These students are provided with research opportunities and faculty mentors.

The program is named for astronaut Ron McNair, who died in the 1986 space-shuttle explosion.

"Getting the word out about the programs is forever challenging," McCann says. "We feel like we only reach about 10 percent of the students we could be reaching."

Education Talent Search is in 50 schools in New Hampshire and serves 1,150 students. At UNH, Upward Bound helps about 90 students.