



1976 - 2026

2026 ASPIRE CONFERENCE BIG TECH ON THE PRAIRIE

**OCTOBER 10-14
DELTA HOTEL, FARGO, ND**



Dear ASPIRE Colleagues,

Welcome to Fargo, North Dakota, and welcome to the 50th Annual ASPIRE Conference!

It is truly wonderful to have you here as we celebrate five decades of ASPIRE and the people who have dedicated their careers to expanding educational opportunity for students across our region.

This year's gathering feels especially meaningful. The past year has brought tremendous uncertainty and difficult moments for TRIO programs, our institutions, our colleagues, and—most importantly—the students we serve. There have been questions about the future, changes that have required us to adapt, and moments when the path ahead has not been clear.

Through it all, one thing has remained clear: we are stronger when we stand together.

TRIO has always been built on people—people who believe in students, people who open doors, people who find solutions when resources are limited, and people who refuse to give up on the promise of education. When times are difficult, our greatest resource is one another. The relationships we build, the ideas we share, and the encouragement we give each other help carry this work forward.

As we gather for this 50th anniversary, I hope we take time to celebrate how far we have come while also looking toward the future with renewed purpose. The challenges ahead may not always be easy, but we do not face them alone. By supporting one another, sharing what we have learned, and continuing to believe in the students at the heart of our work, we can meet whatever comes next.

Thank you for making the journey to Fargo and for bringing your experience, your ideas, your stories, and your commitment to TRIO with you. Your presence makes this celebration special, and your continued dedication makes a difference in the lives of countless students. While you are here, we hope you will learn something new, reconnect with old friends, make new ones, and take a little time to enjoy Fargo and North Dakota.

Most of all, we hope you leave feeling reminded of why this work matters—and knowing that you have a community standing beside you. Thank you for 50 years of ASPIRE. Thank you for all you do for students. And welcome to Fargo!

With appreciation and warmest regards,
Lori Larson, Conference Chair & ASPIRE Treasurer
Kelly Kennedy, Conference Co-Chair





Dear ASPIRE family,

As the 2025-2026 year comes to a close, I wanted to take a moment to reflect on the past many months, celebrate our community's perseverance, and extend my deepest gratitude to each of you.

From an attack on our very ability to organize, to grant competitions that sought to redefine the mission and purpose of TRIO, to the latest attempt to alter the law that forms the bedrock of federal grantmaking, the past year has held an immense amount of uncertainty and instability. Through all of this, the ASPIRE community's response has been remarkable. You showed up for our students: keeping program doors open, holding late-night advising sessions, organizing campus visits, and providing the stability our students rely on for success. You showed up for each other: sharing program resources, supporting each other through grant writing, and sometimes just providing professional fellowship when burnout was threatening to set in. You advocated tirelessly: amplifying the impact of TRIO to ensure decision-makers understood the undeniable value of college opportunity programs.

None of this would have been possible without your expertise, leadership, and unwavering commitment to your students and colleagues. You have shown that, though the tools we use might evolve and change over time, the heart of education remains the human connection between dedicated professionals and the students they serve.

As we look ahead to the 2026-2027 year, I am excited for Rafael's vision, insight, and strategic leadership. The ASPIRE board's commitment to supporting your growth, protecting your time, and amplifying your voice remains stronger than ever. Thank you for your continued membership, for your active involvement in this association, and for your daily dedication to the future of educational advancement for first-generation, low-income students and students with disabilities everywhere.

Finally, thank you for being present to spend time together as a TRIO community over the coming days here in Fargo. ASPIRE turning 50 years old is a momentous accomplishment. We are thrilled to celebrate 50 years of sustaining the organization our founders built to protect TRIO and 50 years of promoting college access and opportunity from the Intermountain West to the Great Plains.

Though uncertainty may await us in the year ahead, please remember that times of adversity do not change our mission—they clarify it. The work you do every day has the power to transform generations and your resilience this year has proven that our collective strength is far greater than any obstacle placed in front of us.

Yours in TRIO,

Samantha A. Hill, M.S.
ASPIRE President



THE ASPIRE BOARD OF DIRECTORS IS HONORED TO WELCOME YOU TO THIS LANDMARK CONFERENCE IN FARGO AS WE CELEBRATE 50 YEARS OF INNOVATION, COMMUNITY AND IMPACT.

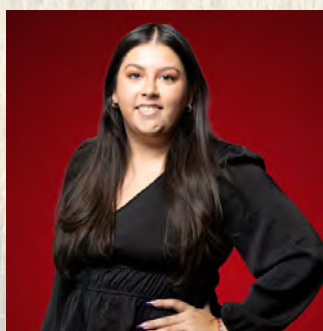
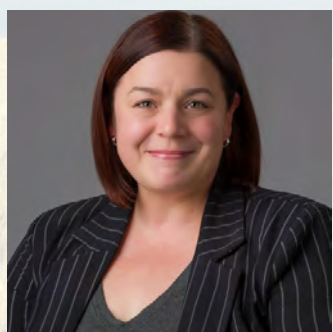
THIS IS NOT ONLY A CELEBRATION OF OUR HISTORY, BUT A TRIBUTE TO THE DEDICATED MEMBERS WHO HAVE DRIVEN ASPIRE'S MISSION FORWARD SINCE THE BEGINNING.

WE EXTEND OUR DEEPEST GRATITUDE TO OUR FOUNDERS, PAST AND PRESENT MEMBERS, AND THE LEADERS WHOSE VISION ESTABLISHED AND SUSTAINED THIS ASSOCIATION THROUGH THE PAST FIVE DECADES. SPECIAL THANKS GO TO OUR CONFERENCE COMMITTEE, SPONSORS, SPEAKERS, AND VOLUNTEERS. WITHOUT YOUR SUPPORT AND EFFORT, THIS HISTORIC EVENT WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE.

OVER THE COMING DAYS, WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO ENGAGE, NETWORK, AND COLLABORATE AS WE LOOK TO THE FUTURE. WE HOPE THIS MILESTONE CONFERENCE INSPIRES YOU, FOSTERS LASTING CONNECTIONS, AND SETS THE STAGE FOR THE NEXT 50 YEARS OF GROWTH. THANK YOU FOR BEING AN ESSENTIAL PART OF THE ASPIRE STORY!

WITH DEEPEST APPRECIATION,

2025-2026 ASPIRE BOARD OF DIRECTORS





50/50 Raffle

1 ticket — \$1

6 tickets — \$5

15 tickets — \$10

30 tickets — \$20

State Baskets

1 ticket — \$1

6 tickets — \$5

15 tickets — \$10

30 tickets — \$20

Need tickets?

Buy here!



AUCTION

Check out our Silent Auction items, generously donated by members.

A LIVE AUCTION will be held during the banquet!

Win something?

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ASPIRE PROJECT MEMBERSHIPS & PERSONAL DONATIONS 2025-26

COLORADO PROJECT MEMBERSHIPS – 33%

Adams State College – UB, UBMS
 Colorado Mesa University – SSS, UB
 Colorado State University – SSS, SSS Stem
 Colorado State University Pueblo – EOC, UB, SSS, TS
 Community College of Aurora – UB
 Fort Lewis College – TS, UB
 Front Range Community College – UB
 Greeley Dream Team – TS
 Metropolitan State University – SSS, UB
 Northeastern Junior College – SSS
 Pueblo Community College – SSS, UB 1&2, UBMS
 Trinidad State Junior College – SSS
 University of Colorado Denver – McNair, SSS
 University of Northern Colorado – SSS

MONTANA PROJECT MEMBERSHIPS – 59%

Flathead Valley Community College – SSS
 Helena College – SSS
 Montana State University Billings – SSS 1 & 2
 Montana State University Northern – SSS
 Montana Tech – SSS Stem, TS 1&2, UB, UBMS
 Montana University System – EOC, TS
 Rocky Mountain College – SSS
 Salish Kootenai College – SSS, UB
 University of Montana – SSS, UB

NORTH DAKOTA PROJECT MEMBERSHIPS – 45%

University of North Dakota – EOC, McNair, SSS, TS, UB

ASPIRE PERSONAL DONATIONS

ASPIRE Advocates (\$50-99)

Christina Millemon

ASPIRE Council (\$100-249)

Paul Thayer

ASPIRE Patrons (\$250-499)

ASPIRE Champions (\$500-999)

Cynthia Ayala-Cooper

Jami Bayles

Andrea Reeve

ASPIRE Benefactors (\$1,000+)



SOUTH DAKOTA PROJECT MEMBERSHIPS – 75%

Black Hills State University – SSS
 Dakota Wesleyan University – SSS
 Northern State University – SSS, McNair
 South Dakota State University – UB
 University of South Dakota – SSS, TS 1&2, UB

UTAH PROJECT MEMBERSHIPS – 100%

Utah Technical University – SSS, TS, UB
 Salt Lake Community College – SSS, SSS-STEM, SSS-Veterans, TS
 Snow College – SSS, UB
 Southern Utah University – SSS, TS, UB
 University of Utah – SSS, UB
 Utah State University – SSS
 USU Eastern – UB
 USU Blanding Campus – SSS, TS, UB
 Utah Valley University – EOC, SSS, UB, TS
 Weber State University – SSS, SSS-STEM, UB, VUB
 Westminster College – McNair

WYOMING PROJECT MEMBERSHIPS – 67%

Northwest College – SSS
 University of Wyoming – EOC 1 & 2, McNair, SSS, UB, UBMS, SEO

COE FAIR SHARE & PERSONAL DONATIONS 2025-26

Colorado COE Fair Share Total = 133%

“10 for 10” Goal was 14, Achieved 14!

Dariana Roybal	Colorado School of Mines
Andrea Reeve	Colorado State University
Cynthia Ayala	Colorado State University
April Cano-Garcia	Colorado State University
Lourdes Zavala	Colorado State University
Adrienne Shabandarian	Community College of Aurora
Henry Ornelas	University of Colorado Denver
Oscar Felix	Friend of the Council
Pamela Bentley	Metropolitan State University of Denver
Alixandria Aguilar	Pueblo Community College
Tracy Neve	Pueblo Community College
Andrea Martinez	Pueblo Community College
Teresa De Herrera	Red Rocks Community College
Rafael Orozco	University of Colorado Denver

North Dakota COE Fair Share Total = 76%

“10 for 10” Goal was 5, Achieved 6!

Dawn Eckhardt	University of North Dakota
Lori Mattison	University of North Dakota
Derek Sporbert	University of North Dakota
Andrew Larson	University of North Dakota
Joan Jorde	University of North Dakota
Nadine Butts	University of Mary
Scott Norenberg	North Dakota State University

Montana COE Fair Share Total = 123%

“10 for 10” Goal was 13, Achieved 15!

Wanda Morales	Friend of the Council
Ann Wilcockson	Helena College University of Montana
Kelsey Anderson	Helena College University of Montana
Jennifer Pope	Montana State University -Billings
Laura Gittings-Carlson	Montana State University -Billings
Barb Waters	Montana State University -Billings
Kimberly Kost	Montana State University – Billings
Carissa Johnson	Montana Technological University
Thomas Reget	Montana Technological University
Kristy Wiley	Montana Technological University
Lindsey Wolstein	Montana Technological University
Theresa Rader	Montana Technological University
Rachel Powers	Montana Technological University
Jeni Mason	Montana Technological University
Joanne Morrow	Salish Kootenai College
Amy Verlanic	Sonoma State University
Dan Benge	University of Montana
Xavier Xtravaganza	University of Montana
Jonathan Carter	University of Montana
Darlene Sampson	University of Montana

**TOTAL COE Fair Share
For ASPIRE
121%**

South Dakota COE Fair Share Total = 100%

“10 for 10” Goal was 4, Achieved 5!

Carissa Deming	Black Hills State University
Nathan Bylander	South Dakota State University
Jodi Wilson	Dakota Wesleyan University
Trevor Mandernach	University of South Dakota
Carol Voss-Ward	University of South Dakota

Utah COE Fair Share Total = 128%

“10 for 10” Goal was 7, Achieved 8!

Jami Bayles	USU Blanding
Mike Anderson	Snow College
Jennie Hall	Utah Valley University
Brady Curtis	Utah Valley University
Tami Shugart	Southern Utah University
Samantha Hill	Weber State University
Greg Christiansen	Weber State University
Sara Byerly	Create the Ripple Consulting, LLC

Wyoming COE Fair Share Total = 122%

“10 for 10” Goal was 7, Achieved 8!

Joseph Aguirre	Northern Wyoming Comm. College
Tiffany Fegler	University of Wyoming
Zackie Salmon	University of Wyoming
Mike Wade	University of Wyoming
Susan Stoddard	University of Wyoming
Pilar Flores	University of Wyoming
Paul Hesco	University of Wyoming
Angelica Vialpando	Council for Opportunity in Education

ASPIRE & COE THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!!!





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Proposal support and professional development
from someone who knows the work and the mission



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Strategy and thought partnership

02

LEAD CONFIDENTLY

Customized campus training
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Program operations

03

OPERATE COMPLIANTLY

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Practical technical assistance

LET'S BUILD
WHAT'S NEXT

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SCAN TO CONNECT





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PROUDLY CONGRATULATES**

ANGELICA VIALPANDO

2026 FRIEND OF ASPIRE

LEADER • ADVOCATE • MENTOR • FRIEND

Your leadership has
strengthened TRIO and
the ASPIRE community



A WELL-DESERVED HONOR

For more than two decades, you have served the TRIO community with wisdom, generosity, and purpose. You have been a trusted mentor to ASPIRE leaders, a steady voice during challenging moments, and a tireless advocate for the students and programs at the heart of our work.

Thank you for the countless conversations, collaborations, and acts of encouragement that have helped others lead with greater confidence. Your impact reaches far beyond any single role or title, and this recognition reflects what so many of us already know: ASPIRE is stronger because of you.

**WITH ADMIRATION
AND GRATITUDE**

AMY L. VERLANIC, MSPTC

Founder & CEO | ALV Consulting

Proudly rooted in the ASPIRE region

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Looking for the easy, secure, and reliable solution to manage your TRIO data?

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Welcome to the 2026 ASPIRE Conference!

Bank of North Dakota (BND) is committed to supporting students at every stage of their educational journeys, from saving and planning to paying for college. The FAFSA plays a vital role in that process.

Join BND's Amanda Woidyla on Tuesday, Oct. 13, for a timely presentation on FAFSA updates and upcoming financial aid changes upon implementation of the One Big Beautiful Bill.

Session will be held between
10 and 11 a.m. in the Bach room.

bnd.nd.gov

BND
Bank of North Dakota

DASHBOARD

Always keep a pulse on your progress. View key metrics like funded-to-serve, eligibility status, grades, and many more important indicators, all in one place.

EASY NAVIGATION

Enjoy an updated look with clickable tiles and a quick search bar option. Finding what you need is super easy, everything is right where you expect it to be.

DIGITAL WALLET

Securely store student photos, forms, transcripts, and documents in one digital folder. Supports PDF, DOCX, XLSX, JPG formats and more for upload and printing.

UPDATED REPORTS

Generate professional, easy-to-export reports, from student demographics to academic progress. Updated graphs and current data make every presentation shine.

**STUDENT CHECK-IN
KIOSK (BOLT)**

Students can scan or swipe their ID cards to automatically check in and out for appointments, workshops, field trips, and more.

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Send bulk messages and receive student replies directly in BOT. Delivery tracking included. Messages are sent via anonymous numbers to protect your personal phone number.

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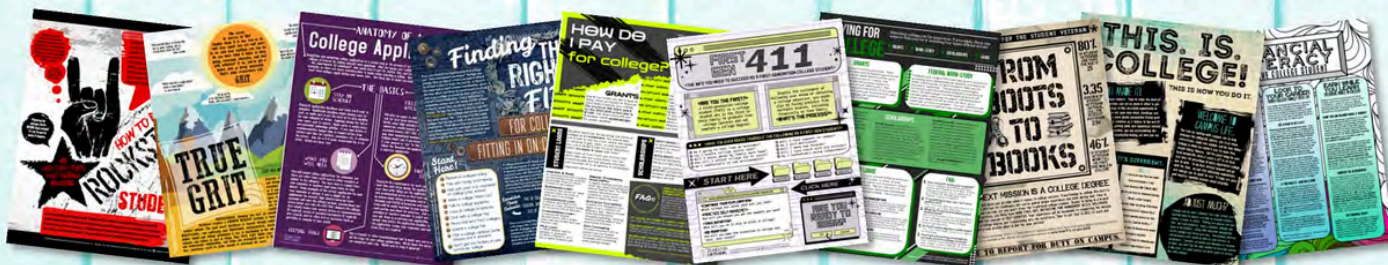
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Hey, ASPIRE!

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Use the code **ASPIRE26** for a conference discount on printed curriculum! Discount is for \$10 off each packet of 50 handouts. Ends December 11th.

Plus, DreamCatcher Curriculum Offers:

- Annual Scholarship Program (Open May 1st-15th)
- Print-Friendly Program Guides that include workshop lesson plan, supplemental activities, and topic assessments for data collection.
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TRIO **UpwardBound**
at MONTANA**TECH**

TRIO **UpwardBound** **MATH & SCIENCE**
at MONTANA**TECH**



Thank you, Sam, for your outstanding leadership, dedication, and service to ASPIRE. Welcome Rafa, we are excited to step into the future with you at the helm.

//Saturday, October 10

<9:00 AM - 5:00 PM>

Board Meeting

Sonata I

<5:00 PM - 7:00 PM>

Dinner on your own

//Sunday, October 11

<9:00 AM - 6:30 PM>

Registration

Concourse

<9:00 AM - 4:30 PM>

Mental Health First Aid

Brahms

<9:00 AM - 4:00 PM>

Upward Bound, UBMS, VUB, and McNair
Proposal Writing

Sonata I

<1:00 PM - 4:00 PM>

Leadership Expectations and Processes

Mozart I

<1:00 PM - 4:00 PM>

Newcomers

Bach

<4:30 PM - 7:00 PM>

Dinner on your own

<7:00 PM - 8:00 PM>

Welcome & Keynote
Networking, Making Connections, and
Building Your Professional Identity

Ballroom 1 & 2

<8:00 PM - 9:00 PM>

President's Reception

Ballroom 3

//Monday, October 12

<8:30 AM - 5:00 PM>	Registration	Concourse	
<9:00 AM - 10:00 AM>	Plenary	Ballroom 1 & 2	ASPIRE Leadership Past to Present
<10:10 - 11:00 AM>	Program Shares	Brahms	Upward Bound - Phil Coghlan
		Bach	Educational Opportunity Center - Lori Mattison
		Mozart I	Talent Search - Jami Bayles
		Mozart II	Student Support Services - Nadine Butts
		Etude	McNair - Kelly Kennedy
<11:00 AM - 1:00 PM>	TRIO Achiever Luncheon	Ballroom 1 & 2	
<1:00 PM - 2:00 PM>	Concurrent Sessions	Brahms	ALV Consulting
		Bach	Mastery Prep
		Mozart I	Wendy Dahlberg & Lori Larson
		Mozart II	Charlie Luecke
		Etude	Veterans
<2:10 PM - 4:00 PM>	Regional Meeting	Overture	Student Access
		Ballroom 1 & 2	
		Brahms	Colorado
		Bach	Montana
		Mozart I	North Dakota
<4:00 PM - 5:00 PM>	State Meetings	Mozart II	South Dakota
		Etude	Utah
		Overture	Wyoming
<5:30 PM - 7:00 PM	ASPIRE Video	Ballroom 3	
<7:30 PM - 9:00 PM>	President's Legacy Dinner	Ballroom 3	Invite Only
<9:00 - 11:0 PM0>	ND Games, Crafts, & Karaoke Free Wing Bar + Cash Bar	Ballroom 1 & 2	

//Tuesday, October 13

<8:30 AM - 5:00 PM>	Registration	Concourse	
<8:00 AM - 9:00 AM>	Candidate's Forum	Mozart II	
<9:00 AM - 10:00 AM>	Plenary	Ballroom 1 & 2	Pathways to Leadership
<10:00 AM - 11:00 AM>	Concurrent Sessions	Brahms	Maureen Hoyler and Angelica Vialpando
		Bach	Bank of ND
		Mozart I	Andrea Reeve
		Mozart II	Compansol
		Etude	Tom Schmidt
<11:00 AM - 12:00 PM>	Regional Meeting II	Ballroom 1 & 2	
<12:00 PM - 2:00 PM>	Lunch on your own		
<2:00 PM - 3:00 PM>	State Meeting II	Brahms	Colorado
		Bach	Montana
		Mozart I	North Dakota
		Mozart II	South Dakota
		Etude	Utah
		Overture	Wyoming
<3:00 PM - 4:30 PM>	Plenary	Ballroom 1 & 2	Advocacy
<6:00 PM - 7:00 PM>	Social	Crystal Court South	
<6:30 PM - 7:00 PM>	Silent Auction & Raffle Close		
<7:00 PM - 8:30 PM>	Banquet	Ballroom 1 & 2	
<9:00 PM- 11:00 PM>	Self-Guided Downtown Fargo Pub Crawl		

//Wednesday, October 14		
<9:00 AM - 10:00 AM>	Breakfast & Awards	Ballroom 1 & 2
<10:00 AM - 11:00 AM>	COE Update	Ballroom 1 & 2
<11:00 AM - 11:30 AM>	Closing	Ballroom 1 & 2
	Board Meeting	Sonata I



FOLLOW ASPIRE ON
SOCIAL MEDIA TO STAY UP
TO DATE ON EVENTS &
ADVOCACY EFFORTS.



//Sunday, October 11 Keynote Speaker

Ricky White, Niigonanakud

CEO, First Nations Consultants, LLC | Creator of the Native American Best Practices Framework

Ricky White, Niigonanakud, is Anishinaabe from Whitefish Bay First Nation in Ontario, Canada. He is a lifetime member of the renowned Whitefish Bay Singers and was raised immersed in the Anishinaabe language, culture, ceremonies, songs, stories, and teachings of his community. Growing up in the relative isolation of his First Nation community allowed Ricky to retain a deep connection to Anishinaabe language and ways of knowing and teachings that continue to guide his spirit, leadership, and life's work today.

With more than 25 years of experience in education, Ricky has served as an Ojibwe Language and Culture Teacher, Assistant Principal, Principal, Executive Director of Education, and Superintendent of Schools. Throughout his career, he has combined Indigenous knowledge with extensive professional experience in school improvement, leadership, school climate, student engagement, and reaching children and families whom traditional systems have too often struggled to serve.

Today, Ricky is the CEO of First Nations Consultants, LLC and creator of the Native American Best Practices Framework, a culturally grounded and action-oriented approach to transforming how schools, universities, Tribal Nations, government agencies, and organizations work with Native American children, families, and communities.

At the heart of Ricky's framework is a simple but powerful belief: people thrive when they experience genuine belonging. His work helps organizations intentionally create environments where people feel Respected, Supported, Accepted, and Included. Rather than stopping at cultural awareness or academic knowledge about Native people, Ricky challenges professionals to move toward cultural intelligence by putting cultural understanding into action through relationships, behaviors, practices, policies, and systems.

Ricky White's Native American Best Practices Framework integrates culturally responsive practices, trauma-informed care, intergenerational trauma, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), positive identity development, Native language and culture revitalization, relational leadership, and the creation of healthy belonging. His work is grounded in Indigenous knowledge and teachings, including the Seven Grandfather Teachings, Medicine Wheel teachings, Circle of Courage, storytelling, land-based learning, language, culture, and the wisdom of elders and community.

Ricky's influence extends well beyond schools and classrooms. He has also been recognized as the Minnesota Indian Education Association Teacher of the Year and Minnesota Indian Education Association Administrator of the Year.

An engaging storyteller, educator, facilitator, and speaker, Ricky is a sought-after keynote speaker, master of ceremonies, trainer, and consultant for schools, universities, Tribal Nations, conferences, government agencies, and organizations throughout the United States and Canada. Whether speaking to a room of educators, university faculty, Tribal leaders, human-service professionals, or community members, Ricky combines humor, storytelling, cultural teachings, research, and practical strategies that participants can immediately bring back to their work.

Ricky does more than teach people about Native American culture. He helps people understand how Indigenous wisdom can change the way we lead, teach, build relationships, create belonging, and care for one another.

His message is rooted in a principle that has guided his career:
"What is good for Native American people is good for all people."

Through his business First Nations Consultants, Ricky continues to share that message while helping organizations move from awareness to understanding, from understanding to action, and from action to meaningful and lasting change.



//Monday, October 12 Plenary Speakers

<Andrea Reeve>



Andrea G. Takemoto Reeve is a retired TRIO Director and current Adjunct Faculty with the School of Education-Student Affairs in Higher Education (SAHE) master's program, Colorado State University (CSU), Fort Collins, Colorado. Semi-retired, she works as an educational consultant related to college access and success; program assessment, evaluation-compliance, and programs preparing to write federal TRIO grants coaching, editing, review, precollege and postsecondary student retention, and first-year programs. Andrea is- has been faculty on multiple professional development training seminars with COE, Kansas University, and affiliate regional associations and owes her leadership opportunities to service in the ASPIRE Association as President 1990, COE Treasurer 1992 and 1993, COE Annual Conference Program CO-Chair 2015-current. She served on the CAS Board of Directors, representing COE, for 18 years and helped develop the TRIO CAS Standards and Guidelines.

Andrea has been dedicated to improving educational access and opportunity for underserved students throughout her professional career beginning in 1968, as a National Teacher Corps volunteer in rural Kentucky, middle-high school social studies teacher-librarian in rural Alaska (1970-1976), TRIO UB, TS, EOC and SSS at the University of Wyoming and Colorado State University, and Director National TRIO Clearinghouse COE Pell Institute, Washington, DC. A COE Walter O. Mason, ASPIRE TRIO Art Quinn, Friend of WESTOP, and Cynthia Gayles College in Colorado Awardee, Andrea also serves as a Board Member on the Parris Foundation, Houston, Texas. Andrea has a B.A. in History from the University of California, Berkeley, an M.A. in Education from Western Kentucky University, and ABD in Adult and Postsecondary Education from the University of Wyoming.

<Theresa Rader>



Theresa Rader is the Executive Director of the Institute for Educational Opportunities at Montana Tech where she oversees five TRIO Programs (TSx2, UB, UBMS, SSS STEM) as well as a portfolio of private and state funded grant programs. Prior to this role she was the Director of TRIO Student Support Services from 2015-2023 and from 2009-2015 she worked in the pre-college TRIO programs as Coordinator for Upward Bound and Talent Search. As a first-generation, low-income student, she received BA's in English and Communications from the University of Jamestown. She served as Montana ASPIRE President from 2016-2018. In Addition to TRIO, Theresa directs a summer GEAR UP camp, co-founded the Montana Tech STEM Academy and the Montana Tech Fellows in Research Academy. She was also instrumental in creating an endowed scholarship for first-generation students, is member of Indigenous Mentoring Program, as well as serves on the campus Veterans Task Force and General Education Committee. Outside of her professional commitments Theresa serves on the Executive Board of the Human Resource Council District XII, Co-Chair of the Southwest Montana Community Action Team, Chair of the Southwest Montana Tavern Association Scholarship Committee, and is a TRIO Girl Scout Troop Leader.

<Rafael Orozco>



Rafael Orozco (He/Him/Él) is a college access professional with first-hand experience on what it's like to be a first-generation and low-income student. Rafael is a TRIO-SSS alum from Colorado Mesa University. His research during his studies for his Masters in Social Work from the University of Denver focused on barriers first-generation students face during their higher education journeys. Rafael is currently serving as President-Elect of ASPIRE where he is a champion and advocate for all Colorado TRIO programs at the state, regional, and national levels. Rafael is the Director of TRIO-SSS and McNair programs at CU-Denver where he will continue to advocate and advance support for the education of first-generation students. Rafael started his Doctor of Education in Leadership for Educational Equity, Higher Education at the University of Colorado Denver where he will continue his research and advocacy for first-generation and low-income students.

<Samantha Hill>



Samantha Hill is the director of the Weber State University Upward Bound project in Ogden, Utah and has now worked for TRIO and the Upward Bound program for almost 11 years. She served as the Utah ASPIRE President from 2021-2023 and is thrilled to be called to serve again as President of the ASPIRE region. Samantha served as the chair of the ASPIRE Community Advancement Committee for four years and has served as the Government Relations Committee chair for Utah ASPIRE for many years. She loves that having a career in TRIO allows her to combine her passion for educational opportunity with her devotion to advocacy. She holds a bachelor's degree in Physics from Weber State University and a master's degree in Atmospheric Sciences from the University of Utah. Samantha resides in Ogden, Utah with her husband, John, and enjoys photography, hiking, weather forecasting, computer programming, science writing, astronomy, and traveling.

<Raymond Cabrera>



Raymond Cabrera, Ph.D., is a first-generation college graduate who has earned a bachelor's degree from Rutgers University, a master's degree from Kean University, and a doctorate from the University of South Florida. He serves as Director of Upward Bound and Upward Bound Math-Science programs at USF, overseeing programs that prepare first-generation and low-income students for college success. With over 18 years of experience, he has secured over \$10 million in federal TRIO funding and built multi-state partnerships that expand access to higher education. Nationally, he is recognized for his leadership as a past SAEOPP and Florida TRIO president. His expertise spans program evaluation, compliance, strategic advocacy, and student development, combining data-driven decision-making with a deep commitment to student success. A storyteller, innovator, and advocate, Dr. Cabrera embodies the TRIO mission-proving that first-generation scholars can change the world with opportunity.

//Monday, October 12, 1:00 PM Concurrent Sessions

<Amy L. Verlanic - ALV Consulting>



For more than three decades, Amy L. Verlanic has dedicated her career to expanding educational opportunity and helping TRIO programs create meaningful pathways for students. As Founder and CEO of ALV Consulting, Amy partners with TRIO programs across the country to strengthen programs, develop leaders, improve compliance, and secure federal funding.

A longtime TRIO professional, trainer, consultant, and grant writer, with origins in the ASPIRE region, Amy brings both deep program knowledge and a practical, relationship-centered approach to her work. She believes the best professional learning happens when people connect, ask hard questions, share what works, and leave with ideas they can actually use.

Amy is known for bringing energy, humor, and candor to conversations about the work we all care deeply about: creating stronger programs and better opportunities for students.

Authentic Advising: Building Relationships That Matter

Relationships change lives-but what makes an advising relationship truly authentic?

Drawing on Marcia B. Baxter Magolda's Learning Partnerships Model, this interactive session explores how we can move beyond simply providing information and solving problems to create relationships that build students' confidence, agency, and ability to navigate their own educational journeys.

Participants will explore the role of trust and belonging, motivational conversations, growth-minded practice, and learning partnerships in creating meaningful student connections. Together, we'll examine the small shifts in language and approach that can transform everyday interactions—from giving answers to asking powerful questions, from directing students to helping them make informed decisions, and from solving problems for students to building their capacity to solve problems themselves.

At its heart, authentic advising asks us to reconsider our role: not simply advising students, but advising with students—honoring their experiences, helping them discover their own voice, and ultimately supporting them as they become authors of their own lives.

<Wendy Dalberg & Lori Larson>



Wendy Dalberg is the Community Housing Program Navigator at the University of North Dakota. She earned both her bachelor of science degree in Rehabilitation and Human Services in 2008 and her master's degree in counseling, Rehabilitation Emphasis in 2012 from the University of North Dakota. During her undergraduate college experience, she was a TRIO Student Support Services participant. Her journey brought her back to UND TRIO the fall of 2022. At that time, Wendy began working as a Housing & Community Resource Navigator for TRIO's Community Housing Navigation Program (CHNP). The CHNP is a partnership between UND TRIO and the Grand Forks Housing Authority to assist in mitigating youth/young adult homelessness in eastern North Dakota.

Wendy has 23 years of experience working in different capacities in the human services field. The past 9 years have been dedicated to supporting people experiencing homelessness to find an affordable, sustainable place to call home.



Lori Larson is the Assistant Director of the Educational Opportunity Center at the University of North Dakota. Lori has worked as a school counselor and an instructional coordinator for Upward Bound at the University of North Dakota. Lori is passionate about building relationships, encouraging students, and helping individuals recognize their potential for success.

Opening Doors to Housing, Hope & Opportunities with Youth/Young Adults

We're all in this field to assist young adults in opening doors to education and opportunities that may not be afforded to them otherwise. Many of our young adults have doors closed on them before they can reach the handle. What happens when housing insecurities adds to the door jam? Why do housing insecurities occur? Who has the toolbox needed to pry the door open? How do young adults know what tools should be used? And most importantly, where is their hope?

The University of North Dakota TRIO Programs, in partnership with the Grand Forks Housing Authority, launched the Community Housing Navigation Program (CHNP) during the fall semester of 2022 to address these questions. CHNP serves UND students and community members 24 years old or younger experiencing homelessness or housing insecurities.

Having the CHNP at UND TRIO Programs has been a valuable resource and natural fit. Wendy Dahlberg, Housing & Community Resources Navigator, collaborates with UND's TRIO Programs to ensure our young adults can open the doors that should never have been shut. Through this partnership, young adults are reminded that their circumstances do not define their future, and that with support, opportunity, and hope, new pathways to success are always possible.

//Monday, October 12, 1:00 PM Concurrent Sessions Continued

<Mastery Prep>

Beyond the Score: How Smart Prep-and the Data Behind It-Drives Broader Academic Success.

<Student Access>

Hot Topic

<Charlie Luecke>



Professor Charlie Luecke brings more than 50 years of experience in higher education, shaped by both his academic preparation and professional service. His formal studies and degrees include work at Cardinal Glennon College, Villanova University, and the University of South Dakota.

Throughout his career, Professor Luecke has dedicated himself to helping students prepare for success in higher education. His work with Upward Bound for 34 years, the University Programs at Crazy Horse Memorial for 15 years, and Marty Indian School for 8 years focused on empowering students through practical and motivational instruction. His areas of emphasis have included goal setting, time management, Active Class Presence (ACP), effective study strategies, scholarship preparation & search techniques, building a strong "Educational Village," and the importance of self-care and restorative sleep.

Known for his encouraging and memorable expressions, Professor Luecke often reminds students to "get those post-secondary ducks in a row," that "a good plan today is better than a perfect plan tomorrow," and that "if you stay up to hoot with the owls, you won't be able to rise and soar with us eagles." His enduring message to students and colleagues alike remains: "Carpe Diem." When he is not teaching, mentoring students and staff, writing letters of recommendation, or coaching former participants through educational and career transitions, this proud septuagenarian enjoys playing online chess, working out, researching nutrition, sleep, thermogenesis, and intermittent fasting as tools for optimal wellness.

Professor Luecke is grateful to share life with his wife, Teresa (Brewer) Luecke from the Oglala Oyate, and is deeply proud of their two daughters and five wonderful grandchildren.

Carpe Diem!

If you are serving Native American college bound high school seniors and/or current college participants looking for a unique study away semester, this session is a must. The focus will be on three different semester opportunities at Crazy Horse Memorial in the beautiful and sacred Black Hills. All three semester programs provide scholarships & stipends covering 100% of the costs, i.e., tuition, fees, books, room & board, Y-access, and course related field trips and cultural activities.

- The 2027 Wichozani spring semester - focus on health & wellness courses
- The 2027 7th GEN. Summer semester - introductory college courses for current HS seniors
- The 2027 Wounspe Fall semester - introductory teacher education courses for HS or college students interested in elementary or secondary teaching.

The session will focus on a succinct description of each program, eligibility, application process, and benefits. Although open to all Native students from any part of the country, the programs have been well attended by current and former ASPIRE TRIO participants, e.g., Upward Bound, Educational Talent Search, Student Support Services. Professor Charlie will also provide application and Zoom interview tips for applicants. Carpe Diem! Professor Charlie at cluecke@crazyhorse.org.

<Brilyn Agnew>



Brilyn Agnew is a Military and Veteran Certification Specialist at North Dakota State University with eight years of experience in higher education. Starting on military bases, Brilyn has built deep expertise in helping service members, veterans, and their families access their education benefits.

Navigating Veteran Affairs Education Benefits

Presented by a school certifying official, this session gives TRIO professionals an overview of Veteran Affairs education benefits, including the Post-9/11 GI Bill, Montgomery GI Bill Selected Reserve, and Chapter 35 benefits for dependents. Attendees will learn eligibility basics and how transferability works and leave with strategies for supporting veteran and dependent students.

//Tuesday, October 13 Plenary Speakers

<Arnold Mitchem>



Arnold Mitchem, President Emeritus of the Council for Opportunity in Education, has been a voice for low-income, first-generation students and individuals with disabilities his entire career. Thanks to his work, the federally funded TRIO Programs have expanded by nearly 400% and now serve more than 872,000 students at 1,200 colleges and universities. He began his career on the History faculty at Marquette University in Milwaukee and was named the Director of the Educational Opportunity Program in 1969. He relocated to Washington, D.C. in 1986 to serve as President of the Council for Opportunity in Education until October 2013.

Mitchem has been awarded Honorary Doctorates from eleven universities: CUNY-Lehman College in New York; DePaul University; University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana; University of Liverpool, England, Marquette University; Marycrest College; University of Massachusetts at Boston; Lewis University; St. Joseph University in Philadelphia; St. Louis University; and SUNY Buffalo State.

<Maureen Hoyler>



Maureen Hoyler, a tireless advocate for low-income, first-generation students, and individuals with disabilities, retired as the President of the Council for Opportunity in Education on October 1, 2023. During her tenure, Maureen was the driving force behind numerous groundbreaking initiatives. She launched the Executive Leadership Institute for College Opportunity Professionals, which empowered educational leaders through instruction at prestigious institutions like Princeton, Cornell, and Yale, fostering transformational leadership and public policy expertise. Notably, Maureen pioneered the First-Generation College Celebration, where hundreds of campuses commemorate their first-gen students and faculty on November 8th, the anniversary of the Higher Education Act of 1965. She also forged partnerships with corporate giants like Comcast, advancing STEM careers for underrepresented students.

Maureen's journey began at Marquette University's Educational Opportunity Program, working alongside Dr. Arnold Mitchem. In 1981, she relocated to Washington, where she established the Council's office and played an instrumental role in its remarkable growth over three decades.

A sought-after lecturer on federal law and regulations, Maureen earned numerous awards from TRIO-based associations. She holds a B.A. and a law degree from Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Maureen Hoyler's legacy is one of unwavering dedication to equal educational opportunities for all, leaving an indelible mark on the landscape of educational advocacy.

<Jeff Kahlden>



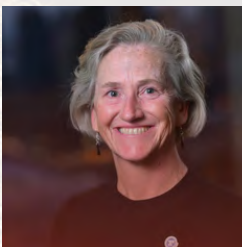
Jeff Kahlden currently serves as Director of Grant Management Services for Dallas College in Dallas, TX. As Director, Jeff works and assists with seven TRIO Grants (Student Support Services, Talent Search, and Upward Bound) and 3 Title V HSI Grants among the seven campuses of Dallas College. Through his work with the grants at Dallas College, he is part of a team of dedicated professionals that assist 2,000-plus students in Dallas and its surrounding communities. Before joining Dallas College, Jeff directed TRIO Programs at Weatherford College (17 years), University of Arkansas-Fort Smith (2 years), and Tarleton State University (3+ years). As a professional, he has seen his roles grow at this institution and within the professional associations of Texas TRIO Association, SWASAP, and COE. Previously, Jeff has served as COE Treasurer, COE Resource Development Co-Chair, SWASAP President, and Texas TRIO president. In addition, he has served as the parliamentarian and numerous committee chair positions at the region. Along the way, he has enjoyed taking on the roles of Emerging Leaders Institute Co-Chair and Student Leadership Conference co-chair, as it was a chance to mentor young professionals and see the students grow by leaps and bounds in the span of two to three days at their conferences. Jeff is a native of Weimar, TX, a first-generation college graduate of Tarleton State University where he received his bachelor's degree in Agricultural Services and Development and his master's degree in Agricultural Education. Besides college and TRIO professional activities, Jeff has been active in the TTAA Alumni Association, a volunteer coach for numerous youth sports programs, Peaster High School Football Booster Club, and Grace First Presbyterian Church. In addition, Jeff loves sports, hunting, outdoor activities, and live music. Jeff resides in Weatherford, TX, with his wife Dawn, son Hudson, daughter Quinn, and his "adopted" kids Josh and Nicole.

<Kimberly Jones>



Kimberly Jones, President and CEO of the Council for Opportunity in Education, has spent nearly two decades advocating for low-income, first-generation, and disabled students while leading COE's work with colleges, universities, and community-based agencies that support nearly 900,000 TRIO participants. She serves as COE's primary liaison to Congress, the Executive Branch, and national education associations, and oversees professional development for college access professionals, student learning opportunities, and the Pell Institute's research agenda. Before joining COE, she practiced broadcast and media law at Dow Lohnes (now Cooley LLP). Jones has held leadership roles in organizations such as the Committee for Education Funding, the First Gen Fund, and Marked By COVID, and volunteers with the Junior League of Washington and the DC Family & Youth Initiative. A recognized expert featured across major media outlets, she is a Truman Scholar and graduate of Yale University and Georgetown Law, honored with awards including the National Bar Association's "40 Under 40 Nation's Best Advocates," the Excellence in Activism Award, ASAE's Diversity Executive Leadership Program, and the Certified Association Executive credential.

<Theresa Rader>



Theresa Rader is the Executive Director of the Institute for Educational Opportunities at Montana Tech where she oversees five TRIO Programs (TSx2, UB, UBMS, SSS STEM) as well as a portfolio of private and state funded grant programs. Prior to this role she was the Director of TRIO Student Support Services from 2015-2023 and from 2009-2015 she worked in the pre-college TRIO programs as Coordinator for Upward Bound and Talent Search. As a first-generation, low-income student, she received BA's in English and Communications from the University of Jamestown. She served as Montana ASPIRE President from 2016-2018. In Addition to TRIO, Theresa directs a summer GEAR UP camp, co-founded the Montana Tech STEM Academy and the Montana Tech Fellows in Research Academy. She was also instrumental in creating an endowed scholarship for first-generation students, is member of Indigenous Mentoring Program, as well as serves on the campus Veterans Task Force and General Education Committee. Outside of her professional commitments Theresa serves on the Executive Board of the Human Resource Council District XII, Co-Chair of the Southwest Montana Community Action Team, Chair of the Southwest Montana Tavern Association Scholarship Committee, and is a TRIO Girl Scout Troop Leader.

//Tuesday, October 13, 10:00 AM Concurrent Sessions

<Angelica Vialpando and Maureen Hoyler>



Angelica Vialpando serves as the Senior Vice President of Program and Professional Development at the Council for Opportunity in Education (COE), where she leads the organization's largest division. She oversees COE's national professional development strategy, guiding the development and delivery of high-quality training, technical assistance, and learning opportunities that strengthen the capacity of TRIO and other college access and student success professionals across the country.

For over 25 years, Ms. Vialpando has worked alongside colleges, universities, and community-based organizations to help practitioners navigate the federal regulations, policies, and practices that govern educational opportunity programs. Under her leadership, COE delivers more than 60 conferences, institutes, webinars, seminars, and technical assistance initiatives each year, providing practical, evidence-informed professional learning to thousands of practitioners.

Ms. Vialpando regularly speaks on legislation, regulations and fiscal accountability, leadership development, advocacy, data-informed decision making, TRIO alumni engagement, and organizational effectiveness. She is known for translating complex federal requirements into practical strategies that help programs strengthen operations, improve student outcomes, and advance educational opportunity for low-income students, first-generation college students, students with disabilities, and other historically underserved populations.



Ms. Vialpando earned her Bachelor of Science in Accounting from the University of Wyoming and resides in College Park, Maryland, with her partner Alan and daughters, Vivien and Elise.

Maureen Hoyler, a tireless advocate for low-income, first-generation students, and individuals with disabilities, retired as the President of the Council for Opportunity in Education on October 1, 2023. During her tenure, Maureen was the driving force behind numerous groundbreaking initiatives. She launched the Executive Leadership Institute for College Opportunity Professionals, which empowered educational leaders through instruction at prestigious institutions like Princeton, Cornell, and Yale, fostering transformational leadership and public policy expertise. Notably, Maureen pioneered the First-Generation College Celebration, where hundreds of campuses commemorate their first-gen students and faculty on November 8th, the anniversary of the Higher Education Act of 1965. She also forged partnerships with corporate giants like Comcast, advancing STEM careers for underrepresented students.

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A sought-after lecturer on federal law and regulations, Maureen earned numerous awards from TRIO-based associations. She holds a B.A. and a law degree from Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Maureen Hoyler's legacy is one of unwavering dedication to equal educational opportunities for all, leaving an indelible mark on the landscape of educational advocacy.

Gearing Up for 2027 Competitions: Lessons Learned from the EOC and Talent Search Competitions

Without intervention from Congress, COE expects many of the challenges and tactics seen during the 2026 EOC and Talent Search competitions to carry into the 2027 Upward Bound, Upward Bound Math-Science, Veterans Upward Bound, and McNair competitions. The lessons learned from this year can help programs begin preparing now.

This session will examine what we learned from the EOC and Talent Search competitions and how those lessons can help programs better position themselves for 2027. Participants will hear what institutions and programs should be doing now, what preparations can begin before the Notices Inviting Applications are released, and what can-and should-wait until more information is available. The goal is to help programs enter the 2027 competition cycle informed, prepared, and ready to respond as the federal landscape continues to evolve.

<Tom Schmidt>



Tom Schmidt is a 1995 graduate of the University of Mary and has spent the past 31 years failing and learning the art of communication in public education, which mostly means explaining the same thing in at least five different ways until it finally lands. He taught social studies for 17 years, where he learned that if you can get teenagers to care about the Constitution before lunch, you can communicate just about anything. For the past 14 years, he has served as a principal, where his communication skills are tested daily...

Tom believes that great communication is part clarity, part connection, part reading the room, and overusing humor, skills he continues to refine in staff meetings, parent conversations, and the occasional frustration when dealing with tech support!

Outside of school, Tom is a lifelong Los Angeles Dodgers fan, a collector of completely unnecessary trivia, and an avid musician with a special appreciation for 80s hair bands, which is ironic, considering his current hairstyle situation.

He also holds the prestigious and entirely self-proclaimed title of 1st Period Pickleball Champion, 1991, a peak athletic achievement that has stood the test of time... mostly because no one has formally challenged it.

Tom enjoys speaking about communication, leadership, and education, and strives to make every presentation engaging, practical, and just entertaining enough to keep people from checking their phones.

//Tuesday, October 13, 10:00 AM Concurrent Sessions Continued

<BLUMEN SOFTWARE - Find out why it's miles ahead of other software>

If you don't have BOT (Blumen Online for TRIO) software; attend this session to see what all features you can benefit from, compared to your current database.

Some of exclusive BOT features covered in this session:

BOT FORM - Custom Multi-lingual Online fillable form for your student(s), option to upload supporting documents and digital signature;

TWO-WAY TEXTING - Send personalized text messages to group of students + Replies are recorded back;

TWO-FACTOR AUTHENTICATION - As used by banking institutions, additional security layer for higher level of data safety and identity confirmation for reduced fraud and hack risks;

MOBILE APP - Update student's information and enter contacts on your smartphones/devices (iPhone, iPad, Android Phone);

WALLET - Go paperless! Upload all documents/files digitally of your students;

BOLT - Let your students self-check-in by scanning ID cards for events/lab usage/workshops for automated logs;

PE POINTS -Interactive Real-Time Tool to check objectives to ensure your Prior Experience Points;

NSCH - Accurate alumni tracking with National Student Clearing House interface for APR updates;

BATCH DATA PROCESSING - Save time & effort with multiple batch data wizards;

GLOBAL FILTER SCREEN - Select your students in seconds using hundreds of pre-built filters; no need to build or recall saved lists/searches;

SCRIPT - Custom Import Utility to import data from your Student Information System like Banner, PeopleSoft, Datatel, Accutrack, Colleague etc. in to BOT;

APR - Multi-tier error checking tools, simulates same tests as done by Department of Education for Annual Performance Report;

SOC-2 Compliant- Gold Standard Certificate for Data Security

<Amanda Woidyla - Bank of North Dakota>



Amanda Woidyla is the University and Student Development Coordinator on Bank of North Dakota's Education Outreach and Financial Literacy team. In this role, she coordinates College Application Month, leads FAFSA workshops across the state, and develops curriculum, workshops, and presentations on financial literacy topics for audiences of all ages. Amanda has been with BND for ten years and brings a strong passion for helping students navigate both their educational paths and financial decisions.

Outside of work, Amanda juggles more hobbies than she probably should, but most of her free time is spent adventuring with her German Shepherds, Ruby and Elektra.

Session Information:

Bank of North Dakota (BND) is committed to supporting students at every stage of their educational journeys, from saving and planning to paying for college. The FAFSA plays a vital role in that process.

During this session, attendees will learn about key updates to the FAFSA and federal financial aid resulting from the implementation of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act. Presenters will explain what's changing and how these updates may affect student's eligibility, award amounts and college financing strategies. Participants will leave with a clearer understanding of the new updates and how to help students adapt with confidence.

<Andrea Reeve>



Andrea G. Takemoto Reeve is a retired TRIO Director and current Adjunct Faculty with the School of Education-Student Affairs in Higher Education (SAHE) master's program, Colorado State University (CSU), Fort Collins, Colorado. Semi-retired, she works as an educational consultant related to college access and success; program assessment, evaluation-compliance, and programs preparing to write federal TRIO grants coaching, editing, review, precollege and postsecondary student retention, and first-year programs. Andrea is- has been faculty on multiple professional development training seminars with COE, Kansas University, and affiliate regional associations and owes her leadership opportunities to service in the ASPIRE Association as President 1990, COE Treasurer 1992 and 1993, COE Annual Conference Program CO-Chair 2015-current. She served on the CAS Board of Directors, representing COE, for 18 years and helped develop the TRIO CAS Standards and Guidelines.

Andrea has been dedicated to improving educational access and opportunity for underserved students throughout her professional career beginning in 1968, as a National Teacher Corps volunteer in rural Kentucky, middle-high school social studies teacher-librarian in rural Alaska (1970-1976), TRIO UB, TS, EOC and SSS at the University of Wyoming and Colorado State University, and Director National TRIO Clearinghouse COE Pell Institute, Washington, DC. A COE Walter O. Mason, ASPIRE TRIO Art Quinn, Friend of WESTOP, and Cynthia Gayles College in Colorado Awardee, Andrea also serves as a Board Member on the Parris Foundation, Houston, Texas. Andrea has a B.A. in History from the University of California, Berkeley, an M.A. in Education from Western Kentucky University, and ABD in Adult and Postsecondary Education from the University of Wyoming.

Intentional Advising Models for SSS and College Success Programs: Everything to Everybody

Join this session to learn more about implementing an intentional academic advising model for SSS/College Success programs that utilize proactive, appreciative, and holistic advising. This session will assist programs with using assessment data to inform advising practice, asking questions about current advising model and considerations in strategizing a model unique to your SSS program.

//Past Presidents

COE / ASPIRE Founder	Arnold Mitchem
1977-1978 / 1980-1981	Fuji Adachi
1978-1979	Kathryn Felker
1979-1980 / 1988-89	Kelly Espinoza
1981-1982	Bruce Austin
1982-1983	Paul Thayer
1983-1984	Barry Ballard
1984-1985	Gary Amella
1985-1986	Kathryn Jackson
1986-1987	Bonnie Helm
1987-1988	Rene Dubay
1989-1990	Andrea Reeve
1990-1991	Jim Kopecky
1991-1992	Carol Gritts
1992-1993	Deborah McGriff
1993-1994	Jake Lindsay
1994-1995	Charles Maldonado
1995-1996	Florence Garcia
1996-1997	Stephanie Hicswa
1997-1998	Lori Strauss
1998-1999	Elaine Metcalfe
1999-2000	Barbara Burkart
2000-2001	Lindy Waters

2001-2002	Lynne Brown
2002-2003	Oscar Felix
2003-2004	Curtis Sandberg
2004-2005	Steve Baumann
2005-2006	Amy Verlanic
2006-2007	Allyn Kostecki
2007-2008	Michael Wade
2008-2009	Dan Benge
2009-2010	Ryan Ross
2010-2011	Dawn Eckhardt
2011-2012	Rachel Martinez
2012-2013	Derek Sporberty
2013-2014	Craig Harter
2014-2015	Jamie Manzanares
2015-2016	Joseph Aguirre
2016-2017	Kyle Ethelbah
2017-2018	Darlene Samson
2018-2019	Cyntia Ayala-Cooper
2019-2020	Theresa Rader
2020-2021	Rachel Lund
2021-2022	Allyson Garcia
2022-2023	Barney Nye
2023-2024	Jami Bayles
2024-2025	Dariana Roybal
2025-2026	Samantha Hill

//Art Quinn Award

The Art Quinn award is the highest regional award one can receive from the association and nominations are submitted by the ASPIRE Board members that are comprised of the ASPIRE state presidents from CO, MT, WY, ND, SD and UT. The recipient shall be selected by the ASPIRE Board and typically receives a plaque. Nominees must be an ASPIRE member, or in the case of a retiree, an ASPIRE member at the time of retirement; must have been employed in a TRIO/EOP program for 10 years or more; must have excelled in providing services and/or support to TRIO and/or ASPIRE at the institutional, state, and/or regional levels; and must have demonstrated a sincere desire to assist students beyond the general expectations of the project guidelines.

<Past Art Quinn Award Winners>

1987	Abelina Megill
1988	Phil Rognlie
1989	Kathryn Felker
1990	Paul Thayer
1991	Bonnie Helm
1992	Kelly Espinoza
1993	Juan Pineda
1994	Carol Gritts
1995	Elaine Metcalfe
1996	Ray Carlisle
1997	Neil Reuter
1998	Barry Ballard
1999	Mary Lukin
2000	Billie James
2001	Chuck Swick
2002	Jim Kopecky
2003	David Trujillo
2004	Andrea Reeve
2005	Joan Jorde
2006	Barb Burkart

2007	Fuji Adachi
2008	Charlie Luecke
2009	Cheryl Kingsbury
2010	Lynne Browne
2011	Oscar Felix
2012	Amy Verlanic
2013	John Shafer
2014	Dan Benge
2015	Michael Wade
2016	Susan Hupp
2017	Zackie Salmon
2018	Maria DeLourdes Zavala
2019	Patrice Giese
2020	Darlene Samson
2021	Marion BlueArm
2022	Leanne Maxwell
2023	Dawn Eckhardt
2024	Theresa Rader
2025	Cindy Ayala

//TRIO Achievers

The TRIO Achiever candidate must:

1. The TRIO Achiever candidate must be a former TRIO Project participant who was enrolled in and successfully completed a TRIO program in the ASPIRE region.
2. The TRIO Achiever candidate must have enrolled in and successfully completed a post-secondary program of study resulting in a baccalaureate or terminal degree from an accredited institution of higher education.
3. The TRIO Achiever candidate must be a person of high stature within his/her profession or has received recognition for outstanding academic achievement.
4. The TRIO Achiever candidate must currently be employed above the entry level designation for his/her profession or enrolled in a program for a degree above the baccalaureate degree.
5. The TRIO Achiever candidate must have made significant civic, community, or professional contributions.
6. Participation in the TRIO project must have had a significant impact upon the candidate in obtaining his/her educational and/or professional objectives (as acknowledged by the participant).

<Past TRIO Achievers>

1984	Terry Lee Williams Colleen Crystal Reuter Florence McGeshick Garcia
1985	Robert M. Federico Charles J. Maldonado Diane M. Zephier
1986	Maria Connie Espino Kathy Pollare-Gille
1987	Dr. Richard Duran Sylvia Laughter Feather Hat Paulette McIntash
1988	Mitchell Davis Richard Gonzales Linda Waid
1989	Susan Lawson Melvin Murdock Robert Tailfeathers
1990	Brenda Dupris Tony Hernandez Richard Ortiz
1991	Woody Absher Archie Bryan Beauvais Cleota Rae Burnette
1992	Tony Montoya Ernest P. Pepion Charyl Presley
1993	Dia Cha Fidelia E. Gomez Muniz Patty Wells
1994	Gloria Collins Steve Emery Mary Ruth G. Salazar-Tier
1995	Gary Munn Steve Emery Cynthia A. Smith
1996	Juan Abran DeHerrera Margie Thomas Giauque Lawrence Phillip Hernandez
1997	Ruth Erickson Jennifer Fyten Laura Lee Monroe

1998	Pat Lawson Lisa R. Roy Dale Warby
1999	Willis Davis Joseph Rogers Helen Y. Smith
2000	Carol C. Juneau Abel C. Ortiz Dionne Anita Voss
2001	Willie Hepworth Susan Bornsen Floyd Ortiz Shari Aaker
2002	Gloria Lopez Leander Russel McDonald Patrick Wempe
2003	Tawnya Beermann Kristina Lizardy Dane Person
2004	Justin Falon Michael Huela Tara Ruttley
2005	Karen Grabanski Devona Lone Wolf Rebecca Harders Watson
2006	Dr. Angelica Lawson Johnvae Quinn Dr. David Yarlott
2007	Derrick Haynes Raymond Long Carlos Valverde
2008	Carla Arlien Jay Harris Regina Kerr
2009	Melissa Buffalo Shaun Eastman Matthew Soupkup
2010	Amy Fisher Rusty Reynolds Robert Hewitt
2011	Tim Border Jason Castillo Elisa Guardiola Melendez-Eisman

2012	Mark Leavitt Josh Nicholas William Pigott
2013	David Sawyer Peni Mouna Heidi Demars
2014	Joyce Belbas Brandon Caste Dylan Waite
2015	Jeanne Nelson Travis Kimsey Elizabeth Mullins
2016	Charles Cordova Patricia Queen-Jordheim Emily Ferguson-Steger
2017	Stacey Jackson-Roberts Christopher Wiegenstein Danielle Olden
2018	Annie Belcourt Daniel Mullendore Joshua Tharaldson
2019	Joyce Belbas Branden Kaste Dylan Waite
2020	Joanne Lee Kasey Hale
2021	Sylvia Garcia
2022	Teri Jo Slack Becky Carlson Carlton Underwood
2023	Christian Gutierrez Micah Ross Noelani Ioana
2024	Randy Baxter Jennifer Caines Dr. Kelsey Morin
2025	Victor Burrola Courtney Hocking Sheena Martinez

//Champion of TRIO

“For Advocacy on behalf of ASPIRE and TRIO students by an elected public official.”

Criteria to be a nominee consist of the following:

- being an elected official (includes Tribal Council members);
- evidence of active support of TRIO and disadvantaged students;
- and
- must serve constituents within the ASPIRE region

<Past Champions of TRIO>

1992	Tim Wirth Senator, CO
1993	Wayne Owens Congressman, UT
1995	Rosemarie Myrdal Lieutenant Governor, ND
1997	Conrad Burns Senator, MT
2002	Kent Conrad Senator, ND
2003	Jack Spiker Mayor, City of Cheyenne, WY
2004	Craig Thomas Senator, WY
2005	Jim Matheson Congressman, UT
2006	Becket Hinckley wy House of Representative, District 41

2008	Earl Pomeroy Congressman, ND
2009	Tim Johnson Senator, SD
2011	Max Baucus Senator, MT
2011	Jon Tester Senator, MT
2012	Floyd Esquibel WY State Legislator, District 8
2013	Jared Polis US Representative D-CO 2 nd District, CO
2018	Daneya Esgar Representative, District 46 CO
2019	Jared Polis Governor of Colorado
2020	Heidi Heitkamp Former ND Senator

//Friend of Aspire

This award is determined by requesting nominations from project personnel in institutions that have an Institutional Membership to the Council for Opportunity in Education (COE). The nominee can be a President, Vice-President, Dean, or other non-TRIO person in that institution or community who has been particularly supportive of TRIO.

<Past Friends of ASPIRE>

1986	Dr. James Hurst
1988	Sue Spencer
1989	President Thomas
1990	Joseph Lynn Lee
1991	Dr. Gordon Harvey
1993	Jim Flightner
1994	Terry Webb
1995	Georgia Beth Thompson
1996	Katie Jean Larsen
1997	Daniel J. Bradley
1998	Dr. Leigh Jeanotte
1999	Toni Weight
2000	Mary Ontiveros
2002	Brandon McLean
2003	Alice Hoffert
2005	Susan B. Patton

2006	Dr. Charles H. Bohlen
2007	Dr. Blanche Hughes
2008	Patrick Clarke
2009	Paul Schierer
2010	Marysz Rames
2011	Carl Porter
2012	Carmen Alldredge
2013	Amy Parsons
2014	Wally Erhardt
2015	Dr. Cynthia Pemberton
2016	Hannah E. Vanhooose
2017	Carmen Alldredge
2018	Timothy Downs
2019	Tom Biedscheid
2021	Dale Elfman
2025	Antonio Farias

//Years of Service

5 Years	David Airne Jason Biggs Bernadette Cordova Jessica Crank Reginald Harge Kimberly Hiatt Kyle Hobbs Stephanie Kawamura Pamela Nandkeshwar Alicia Nava Ortiz Richard Paiz Jennifer Pope Trish Rivino Thanhtung Thantrong Jenna Zavoral Janet Zupan
10 Years	Tamara Blanich Marti Brewer Scott Norenberg Katherine Osten Paul Richards Sam Sessions
15 Years	Phillip Coghlan Kasha Farmer Paul Hesco Carol Sainsbury
20 Years	Eric Rincon Jill Teters Barb (Sullivan) Waters
25 Years	Marion BlueArm (Goldsmith) Pilar Flores
35 Years	Michael Anderson Maria De Lourdes Zavala Joan Jorde

//Rising Star Award

Rising Stars are nominated by ASPIRE members. They are employees of TRIO or educational opportunity programs who have been in their position for two years or less and who have excelled in providing services to program and participants at the institutional, state, or regional levels.

<Past Rising Star Award Winners>

1986	Chris Primus - University of Wyoming
1987	Boni Fullmer - University of Wyoming
1988	Elaine Metcalfe - University of North Dakota
1989	Nate Easley - Colorado State University
1990	Jennifer Grandi - Weber State University
1991	Jane Van Dyke - Rocky Mountain College
1992	Rene Strege - University of North Dakota
1993	Farah Thompson - Weber State University
1994	Shree Deaderick - University of Wyoming
1995	Susan Schaeffer - University of Wyoming
1996	Judy Cowger - University of North Dakota
1997	Lynn Carlson - ASPIRE Training Institute
1998	Tami Newton - Southern Utah University
2000	Carmen River - Colorado State University
2001	Ruth Ann Shope - Montana Tech
2002	Jeffrey Maras - Southern Utah University
2003	Dawn Eckhardt - University of North Dakota
2004	Angela Young - Utah Valley State College
2005	Andrea Schneider - University of South Dakota
2006	Dennis Stangl - University of North Dakota

2007	Barbara Waters - Montana State University Billings
2008	Tina Hartley - Dakota Wesleyan
2009	Lori Brown-Wirth - University of Wyoming
2010	Cara Davis - University of North Dakota
2011	Roxana Luna - Weber State University
2012	Michelle Carroll - Laramie County Community College
2013	Lucy Paltoo - Colorado State University
2014	Angel Ruiz - Colorado State University
2015	Nora Leinen - Black Hills State University
2016	Ally Garcia - Metropolitan State University of Denver
2017	Anthonie Nichols - Utah State University
2018	Alexandria Nordlund - University of North Dakota
2019	Stephanie Moy - Community College of Denver
2020	Susana Ruvalcaba - Colorado State University
2021	Kelly Kennedy - University of North Dakota
2022	Dana Walford - Lake Region State College
2023	Mardee Allen - Snow College
2024	Edith Gonzalez - Colorado State University
2025	Jonathan Carter - University of Montana

//ASPIRE Retirees

1987	Abelina Megill Nancy Robinson
1988	Phil Rognlie Carole Chandler
1989	Carol Tourtellotte
1992	Mark Schumm Beverly Spradley
1993	Lester Emmet
1994	Janice Hart
1998	Dr. Phyllis Brown
1999	Geraldine Aragon Linda Hoines Mel Jordan Snellen Palya Lori Swanson
2000	Carole Aspinwall Alyce Milton Glenn Morris Joseph Primeau
2001	Allyn Bachoroski
2003	Magdalena Gallegos Marianne Griffin
2004	Barry Ballard Barbara Cozort Yvette Hunt Kathy Jackson Michael Paradise
2005	Deatta Chapel Mary Lukin Anne Wilcox
2006	Fuji Adachi Carol Eckhardt Neil Reuter Jerrye Garcia-Swift
2007	Loya Garrett Bob Haddock Joyce Kronholm Bud Sather
2008	Mike Garcia Billie James Jim Kopecky
2009	Mike Medina Chuck Swick

2010	Ray Carlisle Colleen Reuter Donna Rigby Patricia Trotman
2011	Kathy Felker
2012	Barbara Burkart Charlie Luecke Anthony Wojcik
2013	Jan Chavez Rene DuBay Theresa Leiphon Andrea Reeve Ray Carlisle Mary Lukin David Trujillo
2014	Elaine Metcalfe Charlene Herron Roberta Kuderna Maraia Weingarten Wayne Olson Charlene Herron
2015	Randy Wilson Donalyn Sessions Lynn Farris Jackie Smitham Dan Voermans
2016	John Shafer Ray Smith Zackie Salmon Sher Warren Paul Thayer
2017	Lynne Brown Linda Ornowski Marty Foxman
2018	Lori Brown-Wirth Susan Hupp Veronica Chavez Nancy Whatley
2019	Pamela Richardson Linda Tobias Rob Rust Teresa DeHerrera Oscar Felix Michael Manos
2020	Mary Fredricks Diane Gardner Mary Jo Hinsdale Mark Leavitt
2021	Anna Arevalos Patrice Giese Keith Jensen
2022	Joanne Morrow Darlene Samson Michelle Christianson Leanne Maxwell Kitty Hughes Wes Christiansen
2023	Mary Jo Dailey Peggy Madrid Pennie Mickelson Rob Micken Jonathan Morrell Amy Verlanic
2024	Martha Miller Susan Stoddard
2025	Marion BlueArm



COLORADO ASPIRE

Congratulates ASPIRE on their 50th Annual Conference

**The 2025–2026 Colorado ASPIRE Board
wishes the entire ASPIRE community a successful and inspiring academic year!**

SAMANTHA HILL | OUTGOING PRESIDENT

THANK YOU FOR YOUR LEADERSHIP & ADVOCACY

We owe immense gratitude to

Samantha Hill for her exceptional service as ASPIRE President. During a year marked by uncertainty in the TRIO world, Samantha anchored our region with both strength and intentionality spearheading vital advocacy needs while fostering genuine personal connections across our community. Thank you, Samantha, for your incredible legacy of service.

RAFAEL OROZCO | INCOMING PRESIDENT

LEADING ASPIRE INTO THE NEXT CHAPTER

Please join us in warmly celebrating Colorado's very own Rafael Orozco as he steps into the role of ASPIRE President! As a proud TRIO alumnus, Rafael brings firsthand experience, deep passion, and a grounded vision to our mission. We look forward to an inspiring year ahead filled with growth, bold advocacy, and continued regional impact under his leadership.

Colorado ASPIRE thanks the 2025–2026 Colorado ASPIRE Board

President - Adrienne Shabandarian
Community College of Aurora

Past - President- Vacant

Secretary- Shelby Burroughs Pryzgoda
Colorado Mesa University

Treasurer - April Cano-Garcia
Colorado State University

Support Staff - Manuelito Casias
Adams State University

Rep-at-Large - Adrian Ramirez Jr.
Front Range Community College

Rep-at-Large - Alicia Nava-Ortiz
Aims Community College

Rep-at-Large - Twyla Macias
Adams State University

Rep-at-Large - Anissa Manzanares
Pueblo Community College





MONTANA ASPIRE



*Montana ASPIRE at the State Conference
in Polson, MT in February 2026!*

*Congratulations to Theresa Rader!
COE Board Chair-Elect!*

Meet the North Dakota ASPIRE Board



Andy Larson

President
UND SSS



Ruth Gripentrog

Secretary
UND Talent Search



Nadine Butts

Treasurer
U Mary SSS



Lori Larson

Past President
UND EOC

Congratulations to the University of North Dakota on their successful Talent Search and EOC grant awards!

We hope you have a wonderful time here in North Dakota.

North Dakota TRIO Programs



Lake Region State College

Student Support Services

Minot State University

Student Support Services

North Dakota State University

Student Support Services & Upward Bound

Turtle Mountain Community College

Student Support Services

University of Mary

Student Support Services

University of North Dakota

Talent Search, Upward Bound, Educational Opportunity Center,
Student Support Services, & McNair Scholars Program

Meet Your South Dakota ASPIRE Board



Carol Voss Ward

President
University of South Dakota



Ranika Lewin

Secretary/Treasurer
University of South Dakota



Nathan Bylander

President-Elect
South Dakota State University

**Thank you to TRIO programs for serving over 2,700
of South Dakota's students!**



South Dakota TRIO Programs

Black Hills State University

Student Support Services

Dakota Wesleyan University

Student Support Services

Northern State University

McNair Scholars Program

Student Support Services

Upward Bound

Oglala Lakota College

Student Support Services

South Dakota State University

Student Support Services

Upward Bound

University of South Dakota

Student Support Services

Talent Search

Talent Search Sioux Falls

Upward Bound



UTAH ASPIRE

STATE-WIDE TRIO UPDATES

OLD & NEW

What a turbulent year! It is with great appreciation we honor **Eddie Hoyle** from Weber State University for his years of service as he moves into the retirement era of his life!

We also welcome **Noah Wells** to the University of Utah leadership team! We are fortunate!

COACH

CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT

*Every great champion
had someone in their
corner.*

*You are THAT person for
your students.*

March Madness:
Winning the Game.

Dates: March 25-26, '27

Where: SUU, Cedar City

SAM-TASTIC



We want to give a shout out to our own Samantha Hill, aka, **Sam-tastic**, for her dedication to TRIO students, families and professionals in her time as **ASPIRE** Region President.

Your leadership has been thoughtful, careful, and consistent. We appreciate you!



WYOMING CHAPTER OF ASPIRE

wishes to congratulate ASPIRE on

50 years of Opportunity, Access and Achievement

ASPIRE has worked tirelessly for five decades, empowering students, opening doors, and transforming lives through education! We are looking forward to 50 more years!

THANK YOU!



THANK YOU FOR
ATTENDING THE
2026 ASPIRE
CONFERENCE!



SEE YOU NEXT YEAR AT ASPIRE 2027
OCTOBER 13-16
SPEARFISH, SD