

**Toward equal and equitable access:**  
**Obstacles and opportunities in international education**

**A Commissioned Paper**

**by**

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Global Challenges and U.S. Higher Education Research Conference

Duke University

Durham, North Carolina

January 23-25, 2003

**Brief**

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Examination of barriers and challenges to international and foreign language education for low-income, disadvantaged and underrepresented students. Included are the obstacles to providing the education, training and credentialing that is prerequisite for successful pursuit of careers in the international arena, as well as for creating a more internationally aware body of global citizens among less advantaged students, particularly low-income, first-generation and minority students. The research focuses on best practices, or proven models, for increasing these underrepresented students' participation in international education and, ultimately, international careers. (Nicole Norfles, Council for Opportunity in Education)

### **Executive Summary**

The Council for Opportunity in Education is a nonprofit organization, established in 1981, dedicated to furthering the expansion of educational opportunities throughout the United States to help low-income and first-generation Americans enter college and graduate through the assistance of TRIO programs. Based on the conviction that low-income students should have access to the same kinds of international experiences as their more affluent counterparts, the Council launched TRIO 2000 study abroad opportunities. However, questions still arose as to how can the Council promote internationalization of education for TRIO students, particularly their immediate involvement in study abroad opportunities?

The study design for this research project sought input from TRIO staff, those education professionals who serve low-income and first-generation college students, many of whom are minority students. The Council conducted this study in order to obtain information from SSS and McNair Program directors regarding their perceptions of barriers to study abroad experiences that TRIO participants encounter. The study seeks to understand 1) Do TRIO program directors' perceive the study abroad opportunities for TRIO participants as important; 2) Are TRIO participants made aware of study abroad opportunities; and, 3) What are the perceived barriers to study abroad for TRIO participants?

The study found the following barriers to study abroad: cost, lack of information, family constraints, and individual limitations, but not language. Information from the Barrier to Study Abroad Survey suggests that college-level TRIO students, projects and staff all experience some level of disengagement in the value, interest and knowledge they have regarding study abroad opportunities. However, the study also shows that the directors themselves may be considered as a barrier to students' ability to study abroad given the limited information and importance of study abroad that directors communicate to TRIO students and staff. Projects identified how they could better serve students' if provided with increased funding support, information on how financial aid funds could be used, and general information about study abroad programs, which should also be communicated to students' families. Nonetheless, assistance in combating the barriers to study abroad is needed in college-level TRIO Programs.

Recognizing the need to develop global citizens, recommendations to support the involvement in study abroad opportunities of college-level TRIO students and other underrepresented and disadvantaged student populations include

- 1) establish a pilot project with SSS and McNair programs at universities that have been identified by the Open Doors report with high ratios of students studying abroad;
- 2) establish a pilot project at institutions with SSS and McNair programs not listed within the Open Doors report;
- 3) establish an informational campaign;
- 4) identify funds for low-income students; and,
- 5) expand COE study abroad opportunities for TRIO students and staff.

It is the hope that this study will enhance the community's knowledge base from which to improve the organization, delivery and effectiveness of international education programs for U.S. students by presenting on a specific international education issue as it currently limits low-income, first-generation and minority student involvement.

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**INTRODUCTION**

A multifaceted goal of higher education should be to internationalize education, which would include providing foreign language training, study abroad programs, and an internationally focused academic curriculum, and awarding promotions to faculty with international experience. Yet, according to Green (2002), campus internationalization efforts are low: Foreign language enrollments has fallen 50 percent since 1960, the number of four-year institutions with language degree requirements has fallen 22 percent since 1965, fewer than one percent of postsecondary education students are studying abroad, and only 40 percent of higher education institutions even include international education as a goal within their strategic plan.<sup>1</sup> While the goal of this paper was to examine barriers and challenges to international and foreign language education for low-income, disadvantaged and underrepresented students, particularly the obstacles to providing the education, training and credentialing that is prerequisite for their successful pursuit of careers in the international arena, capturing the best available data on that population of low-income, disadvantaged and underrepresented students proved a daunting challenge. However, one set of data led to further questions. Could information about low-income students' lack of participation in study abroad programs provide more insight into institutional barriers to internationalization?

Initially, the intent was to survey the more than 203,000 TRIO Student Support Service and TRIO McNair Program participants at their respective institutions. A survey of that magnitude was not a simple task, nor was it definitive that a survey of those TRIO participants could yield new and valuable insights given the population's current predisposition of not

participating in targeted study abroad programs. Hence, with knowledge of the population and the literature regarding barriers and support to minority populations, the study sought to understand what supports and barriers were perceived by the TRIO Student Support Services and Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program directors relative to their students. It is the belief that the perceptions, attitudes and behaviors of program administrators may yield deeper understanding of needed support for low-income and first-generation students. The survey that was developed focused more specifically on study abroad, but also included open ended questions to assess respondent's levels of international awareness and the manner in which it is incorporated into the program curriculum. Hence, given data limitations, the research focuses on best practices, or proven models, for increasing underrepresented students' participation in international education and, ultimately, international careers by focusing more specifically on TRIO student participation in study abroad.

### **TRIO and The Council for Opportunity in Education**

The Council for Opportunity in Education is a nonprofit organization, established in 1981, dedicated to furthering the expansion of educational opportunities throughout the United States. Through its numerous membership services, the Council works in conjunction with colleges, universities, and agencies that host TRIO Programs to specifically help low-income and first-generation Americans enter college and graduate.

Federal TRIO Programs (Talent Search, Upward Bound, Upward Bound Math Science, Veteran's Upward Bound, Student Support Services, Educational Opportunity Centers and the Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program) helps students to overcome class, social, academic and cultural barriers to higher education. College-level TRIO programs –

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<sup>1</sup> Green, M. (2002). "Internationalizing undergraduate education: Challenges and lessons of success." In Promising

Student Support Services and the Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program - are aimed to help low-income, first generation and other disadvantaged college students to stay in college until they earn their baccalaureate degrees.

The work of educational opportunity organizations has contributed significant accomplishments:

- ◆ an estimated two million students graduating from college;
- ◆ the integration of 2,600 TRIO Programs into college campuses, serving nearly 823,000 students (two-thirds of whom come from families with incomes under \$24,000 -- family of four);
- ◆ the establishment of performance standards that are subject to specific outcome measures. Each program's continued funding is dependent upon meeting quantifiable objectives related to college entrance and graduation rates;
- ◆ increased national awareness of equal educational opportunity issues and diversity in America's colleges and universities; and
- ◆ leveraged \$802 million in FY02 to support TRIO Programs (\$174.9 in 1985)

Based on the conviction that low-income students should have access to the same kinds of international experiences as their more affluent counterparts, the Council for Opportunity in Education in 1999 developed a study abroad program for Student Support Services and McNair students. In summer 2000, the first two programs were launched as TRIO 2000 in partnership with MSU to South Africa and with the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater to Mexico. Although both opportunities were beneficial to TRIO students, questions still arose as to why, out of over 203,000 college-level TRIO program students, only 30 (.01%) participated. How can the Council get more TRIO students involved in study abroad opportunities?

After five years of actively pursuing institutional partnerships to increase study abroad opportunities for TRIO programs, this conference on *Global Challenges and U.S. Higher Education: National Needs and Policy Implications*, sponsored by the Coalition for International Education and hosted by Duke University, provided the needed support to begin such research. In the summer of 2002, the Council undertook a study to understand what barriers prevent TRIO students' participation in study abroad opportunities.

A review of the literature was sought to best address previous findings with regard to barriers to study abroad that affect low-income and minority students. Washington (1998) conducted a particularly insightful study on the perceptions and attitudes of African Americans toward study abroad. Two higher education institutions were utilized for the study: one was an historically black college and university (HBCU) and the other was a majority white institution. From this study, Washington (1998) found that "awareness was the most significant factor contributing to their (African American students) non-participation in study abroad programs" and there is "a statistically significant school (institutional type) main effect" within the awareness factor category (pp. 126-127). Although the literature addressed limitations and barriers affecting minority students (Carroll, 1996; Washington, 1998), there was no control for income or parental educational background. Hence, this study sought to focus more specifically on students participating in TRIO programs given that they represent students from low-income and first-generation family backgrounds.

The study design for this research project sought input from TRIO staff, those education professionals who serve low-income and first-generation college students, many of whom are minority students. Although a comprehensive study involving student input, similar to that of Washington's (1998), could be appropriately applied to TRIO students, the limitations of time

did not allow this type of study. The findings from Washington's 1998 study, however do support a study of this type.

### **Who Do Student Support Services and McNair Programs Serve?**

The Student Support Services (SSS) Program is a federally funded program established in 1968 as a college postsecondary outreach program with the first reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. What began in 1970 with a \$10 million dollar authorization, serving 30,000 students, is now a \$259 million dollar program serving over 198,000 students at over 650 colleges<sup>2</sup>. Throughout its 35 years, however, the legislative purpose of SSS has remained constant. The purpose of the Student Support Services (SSS) program, as described in the legislation, is to increase the college retention and graduation rates of its participants and facilitate the process of transition from one level of higher education to the next<sup>3</sup>. SSS programs may even provide grant aid to current SSS participants who receive Federal Pell Grants to bolster student retention. SSS services provided to TRIO students include:

- (a) Instruction in reading, writing, study skills, mathematics, and other subjects necessary for success beyond secondary school.
- (b) Personal counseling.
- (c) Academic advice and assistance in course selection.
- (d) Tutorial services and academic counseling and peer counseling.
- (e) Exposure to cultural events and academic programs not usually available to disadvantaged students.

The Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement program is designed to encourage low-income and minority undergraduate students to prepare for doctoral study. Given this goal of increasing the number of college students from underrepresented<sup>4</sup> and disadvantaged

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<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Education Website, <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OPE/HEP/trio>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OPE/HEP/trio/studsupp.html>

<sup>4</sup> Underrepresented groups consist of three ethnic and racial categories: black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, and American Indian or Alaska Native. See U.S. Department of Education (September 2002). [A profile of the Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program: 1999-2000.](http://www.ed.gov/offices/OPE/HEP/trio/mcnair.html) Website: [www.ed.gov/offices/OPE/HEP/trio/mcnair.html](http://www.ed.gov/offices/OPE/HEP/trio/mcnair.html)

backgrounds who have demonstrated strong academic potential to attain Ph.D.s, student participants in this program are provided with research opportunities and faculty mentors. The program was named in honor of the astronaut who died in the 1986 space-shuttle explosion. Currently there are 156 programs serving 3,641 students.

To describe the McNair clientele, the September 2002 *Profile of the Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program: 1999-2000* provides the most recent profile<sup>5</sup>. It shows that 72 percent (72%) of McNair students are from families that are both low-income and first-generation as detailed in the TRIO legislation. Low-income defined by the McNair legislation means having a taxable family income below 150 percent of the poverty level. First-generation, also defined by the legislation, means having neither a natural or adoptive parent who has earned a baccalaureate degree. In addition, the legislation requires that McNair programs additionally represent students from underrepresented backgrounds, and the remaining 28 percent of McNair participants fit this criteria.

The current study seeks to understand 1) Do TRIO program directors' perceive the study abroad opportunities for TRIO participants as important; 2) Are TRIO participants made aware of study abroad opportunities; and, 3) What are the perceived barriers to study abroad for TRIO participants?

The objective of college-level TRIO programs is to provide students from low-income and first-generation families with academic and social support to complete college. Although familiarity with international populations and global technology was not one of the skills considered necessary for success in postsecondary education in 1970, today few would question that to be competitive at the postsecondary level and in the work place, international awareness, exposure, and language training are truly advantageous. Moreover, as the Institute of

International Education report Open Doors 2002 points out, although the number of students studying abroad grew seven percentage points from 2000 to 2001, there remain wide disparities in study abroad program participation among underrepresented populations as compared to the general population<sup>6</sup>. Hence, the author of the SSS and McNair Study Abroad Survey sought to determine the extent to which SSS and McNair program directors promote international educational experiences to their students based on their perceptions of the value of such an experience.

### **Methodology**

The Council for Opportunity in Education conducted this study in order to obtain information from SSS and McNair Program directors regarding their perceptions of barriers to study abroad experiences that TRIO participants encounter. The research design utilized a Quick Information Survey (QIS) questionnaire. Initially, the intent was to survey the more than 203,000 TRIO Student Support Service and TRIO McNair Program participants. However, it was not definitive that a survey of TRIO participants could yield new and valuable insights given the populations' current predisposition not to participate in study abroad programs. Hence, with knowledge of the population and the literature regarding barriers to and support of minority populations, the study sought to understand what supports and barriers were perceived by the TRIO SSS and McNair Director relative to their students. Understanding the perceptions and beliefs of program administrators may yield a deeper understanding of what is needed to support low-income and first-generation students.

To gather the data, a two-page web-based questionnaire was developed and distributed to all 944 SSS and 156 McNair Programs funded in the 2001-2002 academic year, utilizing a email

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<sup>5</sup> Mathematica Policy research, Inc. *A Profile of the Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program:*

distribution methodology<sup>7</sup>. Respondents were given a website to complete and submit the questionnaires, as well as a mailing address if preferred. Completed questionnaires were tallied on a daily basis through the website. There were 105 emails that bounced back, signaling that the program director changed. The resultant 995 emailed directors became the population sought for feedback to the questionnaire. Of the 995 directors, 245 responded, for a response rate of 25 percent.

The initial questionnaire was emailed to SSS and McNair directors the week of September 5, 2002. After receiving only a 10 percent return, a follow-up process ensued to increase the response rate and reliability of the resulting data. E-mails were re-sent to all of the SSS and McNair programs. On November 30, 2002, the final set of completed questionnaires was received, totaling 245. Of the programs responding, 38 of a potential 156 (24 percent) were McNair projects, and 219 of a potential 944 (23 percent) were Student Support Service projects, with 12 respondents having both a McNair and a Student Support Service project. Table 1 lists further characteristics of the programs that responded.

Table 1: Aggregated Institutional Characteristics of Responding SSS and McNair Projects

| <b>Institution Characteristics</b>           | <b>Number of Responses</b> | <b>% of Total Received</b> |
|--|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Program Located in Urban Setting             | 79                         | 32%                        |
| Program Located in Suburban Setting          | 46                         | 19%                        |
| Program Located in Rural Setting             | 118                        | 48%                        |
| Unsure how to classify                       | 2                          | 1%                         |
| Program Affiliated with a 2-Year Institution | 100                        | 41%                        |
| Program Affiliated with a 4-Year Institution | 145                        | 59%                        |

1999-2000, Washington, DC: September 2002

<sup>6</sup> Institute of International Education Website, <http://opendoors.iienetwork.org>

<sup>7</sup> Included in the Appendix.

|   |     |     |
|---|-----|-----|
| Program Affiliated with a Public Institution  | 195 | 80% |
| Program Affiliated with a Private Institution | 50  | 20% |

Source: C.O.E. Barrier to Study Abroad Quick Information Survey, November 2002

**BARRIERS TO STUDY ABROAD OF TRIO COLLEGE STUDENTS**

This section will consider the following barriers to study abroad: cost, lack of information, family constraints, individual limitations, and language. As a first step in examining the barriers to study abroad for TRIO college-level students, the study sought information regarding barriers perceived by directors to affect participation. While there may be some interest in discussing similarities and differences between TRIO SSS and McNair program professionals, much of the data presented will be discussed in the aggregate.

Cost

According to the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA), “financial barriers prevent 48% of college-qualified, low-income high school graduates from attending a four-year college and 22% from attending any college at all in the two years following high school graduation”.<sup>8</sup> The financial barriers that affect college going rates among low-income students suggest that the high costs of attendance affect a student’s persistence and ultimate degree completion. Using data from the Open Doors report<sup>9</sup>, we find that institutions with the largest numbers of students studying abroad may not necessarily lead in enrolling low-income and minority students. Additionally, when examining the characteristics of these institutions with high numbers of students participating in study abroad programs, we find low minority enrollment rates. According to a study being published by the American Association of

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<sup>8</sup> National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA), June 27, 2002. website <http://www.nasfa.org/publications/2002/tracsfareport062702.html>

<sup>9</sup> Institute of International Education, December 2002 website:// [opendoors.iienetwork.org](http://opendoors.iienetwork.org)

University Professors<sup>10</sup>, “of the 30 non-historically-black colleges and universities that enrolled

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the largest numbers of black students, 23 were institutions that granted only associate degrees. Just three -- Temple and Wayne State Universities and the University of Maryland at College Park -- were research universities.” Similarly, for Hispanic students, “Of the 30 colleges and universities elsewhere that enrolled the largest numbers of Hispanic students, 17 granted only associate degrees, and only one, the University of New Mexico, was a research university.<sup>11</sup>” It is important to note that low-income and minority students do not usually attend the institutions cited in the Open Doors report that have high numbers of students studying abroad. The cost to attend these institutions may be a variable that precludes low-income and minority students’ enrollment, and, therefore, participation within study abroad programs.

Cost was perceived by TRIO directors as the major barrier to TRIO students’ interest and participation in study abroad. Two questions were asked of TRIO directors regarding their perceptions and experiences of barriers facing TRIO students in study abroad. In both questions, more than three-quarters (76%) of the responses indicated that high costs and limited financial aid and funding were barriers to TRIO college-level students.

In an open ended question, directors were able to elaborate on the complexity of limited financial aid and the high cost of study abroad as a perceived limit to TRIO students. One director stated, quite simply, “They can’t afford it. Period. We never get much beyond that.” Another commented that the students were not only deterred from applying for study abroad due to the high cost, but were also deterred due to the students’ “unwillingness to take out more student loans, especially if the credits earned from the study abroad experience do not apply directly to their graduation requirements.” Not only are many TRIO students “at or below the poverty level,” but their view of study abroad is limited. Another director stated, “The rest of the U.S. outside of our state is ‘foreign territory’ to many [students]...if foreign study opportunities

could be arranged for shorter periods of time and at lower individual cost, more of our students would take advantage of such opportunities.”

According to TRIO directors, associated financial costs of participating in a study abroad program are the loss of wages to be earned during a summer study, the associated lack of family support due to the lost wages that the student would contribute, and the immediate need for funds. Additionally, states one director, “Study abroad is more expensive than staying at home; students cannot work while on study abroad.” Students thus not only incur additional loan burden through financial aid by not working but also experience a lack of family support. Given the increased need for financial support, as a result of unmet financial need, low-income students are dramatically at risk of dropping out. As a result, another TRIO director notes,

Students at risk (and their parents) often do not believe that they can afford the cost of international travel because it increases their overall level of indebtedness. In a family of limited means, the \$5,000 that an educational trip might cost could seem better spent on a used car, or some other item that admittedly would improve the family’s short-term living standard. While the abstract and more long-term benefits of increased global awareness and perhaps greater employability may well be recognized, the immediate need of a paycheck is often reason enough to decide against a travel experience.

Finances are without a doubt “the biggest obstacle” to TRIO students’ study abroad opportunities according to TRIO directors. Consequently, the cost of studying abroad and the associated loss of income is an equally important barrier to low-income student participation in such programs; students “can’t afford to lose the money they make at part-time and/or full-time job if they go abroad.”

### Lack of Information

Lack of information was a barrier frequently cited. According to one respondent, “The biggest barrier is lack of information and the fear of the unknown...especially post 9/11.” Fear and lack of information about how the opportunity will help students in the future were linked to the overarching barrier of information. As one director said, “Lack of information about both the

opportunity and how to finance it coincide with being aware of the relevance to one's major or 'bigger picture'."

On another level, cites a different respondent, "Timewise, students may see the study abroad experience as interrupting their undergraduate studies; that they are taking time out to 'see the world' and not to complete the requirements for their degree." Information and workshops to help students understand the costs, benefits, arrangements, expectations and how an experience abroad can contribute to their academic, personal and/or professional goals are lacking. This lack of information coupled with financial barriers also impacts the family support. Comments concerning lack of information frequently include the lack of family support. One director elaborated on the lack of information applicable to Spanish-speaking immigrants saying, "Much of this has to do with the sensationalistic nature, or manner in which the news is presented, especially in a Spanish broadcast. If you're bilingual, and watch these, you pick up on 'tones' and 'expressions' that hint at the 'horrific danger' that awaits immigrants." Though providing information appears to be a simple concept that is easily carried out, it involves a wide circle that includes not only the possible student participant, but also the student's family members, the financial aid officer, academic counselor and TRIO advisor.

### Family Constraints

Although lack of financial support and limited information dominate the list of barriers for TRIO students as perceived by TRIO directors, they also cite family constraints as a barrier. Lack of information has already been mentioned with regards to how it impacts perceptions of safety. In addition to concerns of safety, one TRIO director notes, "The younger student may or may not have the family support," while "our mature students may have issues with childcare constraints and job considerations." While it may be true that "students do not get the encouragement from their family for study abroad," notes one director, the lack of family

support is due to “lack of information and the fear of the unknown,” as well as the student’s lost contribution to the family’s income. Hence, some family constraints, though they may appear simple on the surface, involve the complex limits of the family’s income, information, and childcare issues.

### Individual Limitations

In the process of explaining information limitations perceived by TRIO students, the survey uncovered limitations of individuals that work with these students. One respondent stated, “Low income, first-generation students (and TRiO staff) don’t have the luxury of thoughts such as study abroad.” This statement is evidence of a misconception that low-income students and staff do not need to consider study abroad. One director went so far as to say, “I don’t think that the Council should be spending time on this issue – it is simply not a priority concern!” Another TRIO person elaborated at length on the value of a study abroad experience while also injecting the question, “Is this necessary?”

Yes, I’d love for all TRIO college students to have this international experience. Yes it would benefit them in so many intangible ways. But is it NECESSARY? No, an international experience isn’t necessary for them to reach their educational goals. Let’s get real....There are more important concerns.

AS previously mentioned, low-income students do not usually attend schools where there are many students studying abroad. Similarly, It is important to note that staff that work with these students at such institutions may not have a similar appreciation or priority to promote study abroad to their students. Thus, upon close examination of the data, it is important to note that some individuals that work with these students may also be considered a barrier to students’ ability to study abroad when they limit the information provided to TRIO students and staff or discount the importance of study abroad for the students that they serve.

The limited access of SSS and McNair students to study abroad opportunities is a critical disadvantage and prompts the question: “How can TRIO projects be more involved in international education opportunities?”

### Language

Language is frequently mentioned as a potential barrier to students’ interest to study abroad (Carroll, 1996; Washington, 1998). However, the data from this study reflect a different picture. When TRIO Directors were asked if they perceived language to be a barrier to study abroad for TRIO students, the majority (45%) responded that language is not a barrier. Only 35 percent of the college-level TRIO program directors perceived language to be a barrier to study abroad for TRIO students. Language was cited as a barrier in two separate questions that were asked of TRIO directors. However, in both instances, financial constraints and costs associated with a student’s study abroad opportunity were perceived as the primary (75%) barrier for TRIO students.

### **The Current Reality in College-Level Trio Programs**

Assistance in combating the barriers to study abroad is needed in college-level TRIO Programs. Some TRIO Programs are not referring participants to study abroad courses, nor are many clear about the amount of funding opportunities available to their students. Overall, 91 percent of college-level program directors value a study abroad opportunity for their students. While 35 percent of college-level program directors value a study abroad opportunity as “essential” to their students’ academic, personal, or professional goals, another 56 percent value a study abroad opportunity as “somewhat necessary” (see Table 4). Before venturing too swiftly into how TRIO college-level directors value a study abroad experience, it is first important to note the percentage of directors that have had an experience abroad.

### International Experience of TRIO College-level Program Directors

On average, more than half (59%) of the college-level TRIO program respondents have had an experience outside of the U.S. Of those TRIO directors who have gone abroad, 63 (43%) were involved in a personal experience and 59 (41%) went abroad for a professional purpose. Twenty-three (16%) had both a personal and professional experience abroad.

**Table 2: Percentage of College-Level TRIO Directors with an Abroad Experience**

| <b>Experience Abroad</b> | <b>Total #</b> | <b>Total %</b> | <b>SSS</b> | <b>SSS %</b> | <b>McNair</b> | <b>McNair %</b> |
|--------------------------|----------------|----------------|------------|--------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Yes                      | 145            | 59%            | 127        | 58%          | 25            | 66%             |
| No                       | 100            | 41%            | 92         | 42%          | 13            | 34%             |
| Total                    | 245            | 100%           | 219        | 100%         | 38            | 100%            |

Source: C.O.E. Barrier to Study Abroad Quick Information Survey, November 2002

Study Abroad Referrals

While it is encouraging that 59 percent of project respondents had traveled abroad, it is equally important to note that more than half of the project respondents had at least some involvement with the study abroad offices on their campus (Table 3). While only half (51%) are in contact with the international program office on their campus, slightly more than half (56%) do note that they are aware of the existence of an international program office on their campus. It is additionally noteworthy that while two-thirds of the program directors responded that they have acquired information on study abroad opportunities for their TRIO students, nearly nine out of ten (88%) note that they are knowledgeable about COE sponsored programs for their students (Table 3). As Table 3 details, information for TRIO student study abroad opportunities is facilitated through COE efforts.

**Table 3: Awareness and dissemination of study abroad program information**

| <b>Total All</b> | <b>International Program Office on Campus</b> | <b>Contact with International Program Office</b> | <b>Information for TRIO Students</b> | <b>Information about COE Sponsored Programs</b> |
|------------------|---|--|--------------------------------------|---|
| Yes              | 56%   | 51%  | 66%                                  | 88%   |
| No               | 42  | 49   | 34                                   | 12  |

|        |   |   |   |   |
|--------|---|---|---|---|
| Unsure | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
|--------|---|---|---|---|

Source: C.O.E. Barrier to Study Abroad Quick Information Survey, November 2002

When directors were asked if they had actually referred students to study abroad programs, the majority (60%) responded “no.” Again, 53 (36%) cited finances as the limitation, while more than half cited finances, work, information and other such barriers. Twelve (8%) responded that they were new to the programs and were either too busy or unsure of how to promote such opportunities.

Value of a Study Abroad Experience

An interesting statistic from the data surfaced under inquiry of what value TRIO college-level directors place on a student’s opportunity to study abroad. Table 4 presents the value that TRIO directors attribute to a study abroad experience.

**Table 4: Percentage of Directors that Value Study Abroad**

| <b>Value of Study Abroad</b> | <b>For Student’s Academic Career</b> | <b>For Student’s Personal Goals</b> | <b>For Student’s Professional Goals</b> |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Essential                    | 34%                                  | 36%                                 | 35%                                     |
| Somewhat Necessary           | 56                                   | 56                                  | 56                                      |
| Unnecessary                  | 10                                   | 8                                   | 10                                      |

Source: C.O.E. Barrier to Study Abroad Quick Information Survey, November 2002

How directors value a study abroad experience, in most cases, is directly related to the level of support and information that they provide their students. Hence, the limited value that one-tenth (10%) attribute to study abroad will affect the level of support and information that the TRIO student receives. Similarly, while more than half (56%) of college-level TRIO directors expressed their belief that study abroad opportunities have a “somewhat essential” value vis-a-vis their students academic, personal and professional career goals, the survey suggest they do not apply these beliefs to their practice in promoting international opportunities to students. One would expect that if more than nine-tenths (91%) of TRIO directors concur as to the value in a

study abroad experience for TRIO students, that there would be a comparable level of direct support and referrals. However, the next set of statistics (Table 5) shows that expectation does not hold true.

Study Abroad Advising

TRIO professionals were asked to comment on the advising practices that their TRIO student participants may receive regarding study abroad opportunities. Although advising students about study abroad opportunities is not a direct responsibility of TRIO college-level programs, both SSS and McNair programs can advise students in the area of counseling, mentoring, research opportunities and career options that may be enhanced by an international experience.

**Table 5: Advising provided to TRIO participants**

| <b>Advising Occured</b> | <b>Knowledge of Financial Aid Used for Study Abroad</b> | <b>Advised Students to Study Abroad</b> | <b>Referred Students to a Study Abroad Program</b> |
|-------------------------|---|---|--|
| Yes                     | 55%   | 62%                                     | 40%  |
| No                      | 9   | 38                                      | 60   |
| Unsure                  | 36  | 0                                       | 0  |

Source: C.O.E. Barrier to Study Abroad Quick Information Survey, November 2002

Perceived Reasonable Costs

While the majority of college-level projects (75%) recognize costs as a primary barrier for their students to participation in study abroad, one program project in three (31%) expressed that costs ranging from \$2,000 to \$5,000 is reasonable (See Table 6). Twenty-two percent (22%) of the respondents admit that they have no knowledge of what would be a reasonable cost for a study abroad experience, and another twenty-five percent (25%) overwhelmingly responded that reasonable cost depends on price fluctuations, the country to be visited, and the length of stay.

Overall, only about one in eight perceive that a reasonable cost range for a study abroad opportunity under \$2,000.

**Table 6: Perceived reasonable cost range for study abroad experience**

| <b>Reasonable Cost Range</b> | <b>Number of Responses</b> | <b>Percentage of Responses</b> |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Under \$2,000                | 32                         | 13%                            |
| \$2,000- \$5,000             | 76                         | 31%                            |
| Above \$5,000                | 20                         | 8%                             |
| Don't know                   | 55                         | 22%                            |
| Misc. responses              | 62                         | 25%                            |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                 | <b>245</b>                 | <b>100%</b>                    |

Source: C.O.E. Barrier to Study Abroad Quick Information Survey, November 2002

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

When this study was originally formulated, the Council for Opportunity in Education was interested in learning more about the barriers that precluded TRIO SSS and McNair students from participating in study abroad programs. We asked college-level TRIO project directors –SSS and McNair programs - questions about their perception of barriers to study abroad for low-income and first-generation students, perception of reasonable costs for study abroad, value attributed to a study abroad experience, study abroad referral and advisement practices, and individual involvement in an international experience.

Information from the Barrier to Study Abroad Survey suggests that college-level TRIO students, projects and staff all experience some level of disengagement in the value, interest and knowledge they have regarding study abroad opportunities. Projects identified how they could better serve students' if provided with increased funding support, information on how financial aid funds could be used, and general information about study abroad programs, which may also be communicated to students' families. Hence, the perceived obstacles to providing the education, training and credentialing for low-income and minority students that is prerequisite

for creating the global citizen and their successful pursuit of careers in the international arena are 1) limited financial support, 2) lack of information, 3) lack of family support, and 4) the individual limitations of professionals that work with these students.

The survey also suggests that projects need additional training and capacity building to understand the value of a study abroad experience in a student's educational success. Close examination of the data revealed that directors' perceptions of student barriers were consistent with the literature in that they point to cost, interest, information and family. However, the survey shows that the directors themselves may be considered as a barrier to students' ability to study abroad given the limited information and importance of study abroad that directors communicate to TRIO students and staff. Hence, project directors and staff must get support from the international/study abroad program offices on their campus so they may incorporate international education opportunities within the information they provide to students, and participate in an international experience so as to better support study abroad opportunities for their students.

### Developing Global Citizens

As American Council on Education (ACE) president David Ward notes, "America's future hinges on its ability to educate a globally competent citizenry."<sup>12</sup> It is important to remember that through education the internationally aware global citizen is created. One approach for creating a more internationally aware body of global citizens among less advantaged students, particularly low-income and first-generation and underrepresented students, is to partner study abroad offices with TRIO college-level programs. Such a partnership will increase students' knowledge of educational abroad opportunities, their benefits, and enhance the distribution of information and resources, thereby eliminating a host complex of barriers.

The goal of increasing underrepresented students' participation in international education and international careers is truly dependent upon deploying proven models of best practice. One such practice employed by COE involved a partnership with Michigan State University to create a summer study abroad course exclusively for TRIO college-level students. The benefits of this model were that it allowed students to remain a part of a homogeneous population sensing no threats of inferiority; it allowed students to openly discuss their inhibitions, and students were able to develop confidence as they recognized their competencies within the rigors of the abroad experience. In each study abroad partnership, two TRIO professionals accompanied students with the academic staff. The TRIO staff provided the needed emotional support that was previously mentioned as a barrier to this student population. An added value of their presence was that when TRIO professionals travel abroad, their learning and appreciation is similarly translated to their staff.

In the latest ACE report titled *The Brave New World of Higher Education*<sup>13</sup>, the authors identify the most pressing challenge in higher education as the need “to respond to the demands of an increasingly global society with an appropriate curriculum and **educational experience**”. Survey data from ACE revealed that many (44%) four-year institutions not only include international education in their mission statements but they are working to provide a global perspective in their curriculum. More importantly, many institutions are “promoting foreign language study as well as internships abroad.”<sup>14</sup> These are promising practices that can greatly impact America's future as long as they include low-income and minority students that have generally not participated. To this end, TRIO projects and staff must also make a commitment to integrate international education opportunities for their students into their projects.

Five recommendations are suggested. Implementation of these recommendations can be viewed in a variety of ways: implementation could be attained through FIPSE grants, through

private foundation funding, and perhaps through TRIO programs. Nonetheless, recommendations to support the involvement in study abroad opportunities of college-level TRIO students and other underrepresented and disadvantaged student populations follow.

The first recommendation is to establish a pilot project with SSS and McNair programs focusing on five to 10 colleges and universities that have identified global education as a priority, as stated in the Open Doors report. We want to assure that within these institutions TRIO students are proportionally represented among students who study abroad and that the steps necessary to assure that this happens are documented.

A second recommendation is to establish a separate pilot project at 10 institutions that have SSS and McNair programs but are not listed within the Open Doors report. The purpose of this pilot is to develop linkages between the study abroad offices and the SSS and McNair programs on the campus to assure that TRIO students are again proportionally represented.

The third recommendation is to establish an informational campaign for TRIO college-level programs. The SSS and McNair programs would be targeted by study abroad advisors who would inform TRIO professionals about methods that low-income students can finance study abroad.

Fourth, we recommend that funds particularly directed toward international opportunities for low-income students be identified.

Lastly, COE should continue to expand its study abroad for TRIO students and staff and continue to actively invest association resources to eliminate financial obstacles to students who are interested in studying abroad in the following manner:

- Provide informational workshops and other related professional development opportunities at all state, regional, and national meetings;
- Encourage and help projects to build the capacity to collaborate with institutional study abroad office;
- Encourage members to participate in professional development opportunities abroad;

- Conduct research in the area of barriers to study abroad and disseminate best practices; and
- Undertake an in-depth examination of barriers to study abroad as expressed by TRIO students.

It is the hope that this study will enhance the community's knowledge base from which to improve the organization, delivery and effectiveness of international education programs for U.S. students by presenting on a broader level international education issues as they limit low-income, first-generation and minority student involvement.

After presenting the findings from the study, the Council for Opportunity in Education will continue to promote student and professional involvement in study abroad and international education programs. COE employs summer internships with corporations, professional development opportunities with international counterparts, and continues to seek institutional partnerships to promote more student study abroad opportunities. The development of new partnerships and employment of better practices, even under financial constraints, has proved beneficial.

There remain challenges to increasing minority participation in international education, particularly if these students come from low-income and first-generation backgrounds. Although family may pose one challenge, another is surely due to lack of income and/or information. Unfortunately, available data does not address challenges particular to low-income student populations. If increased opportunities are to be available to minority and underrepresented students, additional data should be sought from programs that serve low-income and first-generation students, which also have a sizeable representation of underrepresented minority students. Analyzing the data, reevaluating our current practices, and increasing our partnership prospects can make a difference. Ultimately, working together, we can accomplish considerable progress toward increasing study abroad opportunities for low-income, first-generation and all underrepresented students.



REFERENCES



APPENDIX

**The PELL INSTITUTE in conjunction with the Council for Opportunity in Education is implementing this survey to obtain information from SSS and McNair Program Directors regarding their perceptions of barriers to study abroad experiences that TRIO participants encounter. The survey is CONFIDENTIAL. DO NOT include your name.**

**When finished, SAVE your responses to the website. Please answer every question accurately. Respond by October 28, 2002. If you have questions about the survey, please call Nicole Norfles at:**

**The Council for Opportunity in Education  
1025 Vermont Avenue, NW, Suite 900  
Washington, DC 20005  
Phone: 202-347-7430**

1. Please identify which TRIO Programs you are affiliated with:
  - 1 Student Support Services
  - 2 Ronald E. McNair
  
2. Have you ever advised students regarding study abroad experiences? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
3. Is a study abroad experience important for students? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_  
Unknown\_\_\_
4. Is language a barrier to study abroad? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ Unknown\_\_\_
5. Can a student use financial aid to study abroad? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ Unknown\_\_\_
6. Is there an international program office on your campus? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ Unknown\_\_\_
7. Have you ever had any contact with the international program office? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
8. If YES to question 8, have you ever worked jointly with the international program office? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
9. Have you ever advised TRIO students regarding study abroad experiences? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
10. Do you have any information on study abroad opportunities for TRIO students? Yes \_\_\_  
No \_\_\_
11. Have you heard about COE sponsored programs? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
12. Have you referred any TRIO student to a study abroad program? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
  - a. If Yes to Question 6, what was the nature of the study abroad program (i.e. short term, semester, academic, travel tour only, etc.)? \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. If No to Question 6, why not (financial aid limits, work priority, time limitation, language limitation, etc)? \_\_\_\_\_
13. Have you had any involvement abroad? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
14. If yes, was it personal or professional travel? (Please Describe) \_\_\_\_\_
15. List what you define as the three main barriers to TRIO students studying abroad.
  1. \_\_\_\_\_
  2. \_\_\_\_\_
  3. \_\_\_\_\_
16. How do you rate the value of an international experience toward a student's academic career?
  - a) Unnecessary, b) Somewhat necessary, or c) Essential \_\_\_\_\_.

17. How do you rate the value of an international experience toward a student’s personal goals?  
a) Unnecessary, b) Somewhat necessary, or c) Essential \_\_\_\_\_.
18. How do you rate the value of an international experience toward a student’s professional goals?  
a) Unnecessary, b) Somewhat necessary, or c) Essential \_\_\_\_\_.
19. Is the main site of your project located in an urban area, a suburban area, or a rural area?  
1 Urban  
2 Suburban  
3 Rural  
9 Don’t know
20. Which of the following Council for Opportunity in Education constituent organizations do you belong to:  
1 Association for Equality and Excellence in Education  
2 Association of Special Programs in Region Eight  
3 Caribbean Association of TRIO Programs  
4 Mid-America Association of Educ. Opportunity Program Personnel  
5 Mideastern Association of Educ. Opportunity Program Personnel  
6 New England Educational Opportunity Association  
7 Northwest Association of Special Programs  
8 Southeastern Association of Educ. Opportunity Program Personnel  
9 Southwest Association of Student Assistance Programs  
10 Western Association of Educational Opportunity Personnel  
11 None of the above
21. Identify your Project affiliation  
1 Two-year postsecondary institution  
2 Four-year postsecondary institution
22. Is your project affiliated with a public or private postsecondary institution?  
1 Public institution  
2 Private institution
23. What is the number of students served by your program? \_\_\_\_\_
24. What is your perception of a reasonable dollar cost for a study abroad experience? \_\_\_\_\_
25. Explain the biggest barriers to a study abroad opportunity you perceive students face (i.e. lack of information, lack of family support, financial aid, other resources, other limitations, etc.)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you for completing this important survey.**