

\$1.3M Grant Fuels TRIO Support

The U.S. Department of Education has awarded Lee College \$1.3 million for TRIO Student Support Services (SSS). This competitive federal grant will provide funding over the next five years to help the college expand support for students who need help the most.

The term “TRIO” was coined in the 1960s to describe three federally funded programs which emerged out of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 and President Lyndon B. Johnson’s “War on Poverty.” The three programs include Upward Bound, Talent Search, and Student Support Services. Together, they serve and assist low-income, first-generation college students and students with disabilities to progress through academic life from middle school to graduate-level programs.

With this funding, the college will be more fully equipped to help students succeed academically and reach their educational goals. Through wraparound services such as tutoring, mentoring, academic advising, financial aid counseling, and career guidance, TRIO SSS programs help students overcome barriers to academic achievement. This particular support helps students graduate and move into rewarding careers.

“As a first-generation college graduate myself, I understand the uncertainty and barriers many of our students face as they navigate higher education for the first time,” said Dr. Lynda Villanueva, president of Lee College. “First-generation students often juggle academic demands alongside work and family responsibilities without the benefit of a roadmap or support network familiar with college life.”

“At Lee College, we are deeply committed to removing those barriers through dedicated advising, mentorship programs and wraparound support services designed with first-gen experiences in mind. We don’t just open our doors—we walk alongside our students every step of the way to ensure they achieve their goals and thrive.”

Kimanie Wilson, a current Lee College student, credits TRIO SSS with making a transformative difference in her educational journey.

“The TRIO program has been life-changing for me as a first-generation college student. It gave me the academic support, guidance, and encouragement I needed to navigate college and believe in my own success. I truly don’t know where I’d be without the resources and people TRIO connected me with. This program is essential for students like me.”

Through the TRIO SSS program, Lee College provides a wide range of holistic support services, including:

- Academic tutoring and study skills development
- Guidance on course selection and career planning
- Financial aid and scholarship assistance
- Personal and academic counseling and mentoring
- Workshops focused on academic and professional skill-building

Reo Cummings, director of Student Support Services, added, “This continued investment in our TRIO program will allow us to deepen our impact and reach even more students who are striving to achieve their educational dreams. I am confident that,

with this support, our students will continue to achieve outstanding success and make meaningful contributions to the community and the workforce.”

For more information about Lee College’s TRIO Student Support Services program, visit lee.edu/ssss.