COE PRESIDENT DECRIES FAILURE OF CONGRESS AND THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION TO ACHIEVE COMPROMISE AND KEEP STUDENT LOAN RATES LOW

Washington, D.C. — Arnold L. Mitchem, founding President of the Council for Opportunity in Education, issued the following statement in response to the doubling of federal student loan interest rates on July 1, 2013:

“It is extremely disappointing and disheartening that, at a time when our federal government borrows money at a rate of less than 3%, Congress and the White House were unable to put politics aside to prevent student loan interest rates from doubling to 6.8%. Whether referring to subsidized Stafford loans, unsubsidized Stafford loans, or PLUS loans, it has, in fact, been the student borrowers and their families who have been subsidizing the United States government. Now, more than 7 million students who stand in need of financial support face an even greater burden as they contemplate their options for financing their higher education.

However, this political inertia affords us the opportunity to reconsider and correct our lopsided federal policy agenda. For too long, we have sacrificed present and future generations for our own. When Members of Congress return to Washington next week, I strongly urge them to take decisive action that puts America’s future, which depends on America’s students, at the forefront. This is particularly critical for the low-income, first-generation college-goers supported by TRIO and GEAR UP. By keeping interest rates low, we can help ensure that students and their families will not be crippled by the very debt that they accumulate in an effort to build a solid foundation for their futures.”

About the Council for Opportunity in Education
The Council for Opportunity in Education (COE) is the only national organization dedicated to furthering the expansion of postsecondary opportunities for low-income and first-generation students. Established in 1981, COE serves the interests of college opportunity professionals at major U.S. higher education institutions. Through nearly 3,000 federal TRIO programs, these individuals help low-income and first-generation students overcome class, social, academic, and cultural barriers to enter college and graduate. COE provides members with national advocacy on Capitol Hill, educational resources, and networking opportunities as well as offers research and information through the Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education and the Louis Stokes Institute for Opportunity in STEM Education.
SOUTHWEST AIRLINES NAMED OFFICIAL AIRLINE OF THE COUNCIL FOR OPPORTUNITIES IN EDUCATION

The following is an excerpt from an announcement that can be found at http://www.coenet.us/coe_prod_imis/COE/Home/COE/Home.aspx?hkey=040cec49-d947-4110-b9fa-1f30bef9c919

“We’re thrilled to announce Southwest Airlines as the official airline and a proud partner of COE,” said COE President Arnold L. Mitchem. “By enabling greater participation in COE’s training and advocacy events, this partnership will enable COE to strengthen state, regional, and national efforts to foster college access and success for low-income and first-generation students and students with disabilities.”

“This is a significant community partnership for Southwest Airlines. We’re happy to support COE’s mission of greater college opportunity,” said Lidia S. Martinez, Community Affairs & Grassroots Manager.

COE PRESIDENT ARNOLD MITCHEM ADDRESSES THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION’S COLLEGE AFFORDABILITY AGENDA

Washington, D.C. – On August 22, 2013, Council for Opportunity in Education President Arnold L. Mitchem released the following statement in response to President Obama’s new college affordability initiative:

On August 22, 2013, President Obama released his agenda to address college affordability. While I commend the President for addressing the cost of college, especially as it affects low-income and first-generation students and families, I am disheartened to learn that once again this Administration overlooked the importance of supportive services programs like TRIO and GEAR UP in addressing college cost and completion issues. These programs ensure that low-income students receive the services they need to make sound financial decisions regarding their postsecondary education.

This affordability proposal, coupled with the Administration’s level-funding of TRIO and GEAR UP in its FY 2014 Budget Proposal, unfortunately proves that President Obama, Secretary Duncan, and others fail to recognize the importance of critical support services programs that serve nearly 1.5 million families annually and that have been the backbone of support to low-income college students for decades. Low-income and first-generation students need a range of services, including tutoring, counseling, and mentoring, to be successful in graduating from high school and entering and completing college.

We could accomplish many more things if we did not think of them as impossible.
STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

WHAT'S NEW INS SSS?

Student Support Services has undergone some personnel changes. Greg Christiansen has filled the position that Luke Harris vacated. Greg brought his wife and four children back to Utah after 7 years of teaching secondary English and Spanish in Montana. He has hit the ground running and has learned the ins and outs of supervising tutoring in the month that he has been with us. The position that Kathryn Strebel left is in the process of being filled.

Pam, our secretary, is in the second year of a PhD program in Education, Culture and Society at the University Of Utah. She maintains a busy schedule and trains and supervises our two students at the front desk, Mario and Rod.

We have experienced a budget cut due to federal funding which requires us to do as much with less in serving first-generation, low-income students with academic need. We are still taking applications for new participants, although our numbers are increasing fast. We continue to have excellent tutors who work diligently with our students. A lot of our participants have been able to borrow textbooks which save them a considerable amount of money. We have 9 students on our SSS Leadership Advisory Board who help us with workshops while learning to become leaders and meet the needs of our students.

The heights by great men reached and kept,
Art not attained by sudden flight,
But they, while their companions slept,
Were toiling upward in the night.

- - Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

COUNCIL FOR OPPORTUNITY IN EDUCATION COMPLETES ITS 32nd ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The COE conference that was held in Chicago, IL, this year completed on September 11. One staff member from WSU attended and brought back several notes for other TRIO Directors. This conference is in tune with Education and the need to provide a helping hand (opportunities in education) to low income and first generation students.

Follow this link if you would like to see the video recorded plenary sessions from the national conference.
TALENT SEARCH

The TRiO Talent Search program welcomes 3 new staff members to our team. Alejandro Valquinto (Advisor at Ogden High School) comes to us with experience in grants and working with students. Marisol Velasco (Advisor at BenLomond High School) comes to us with experience in higher education and helping students enroll in college. Nick Berg (student at WSU) will also be working at BenLomond with Marisol; he has experience working with high school students from his work with the Student 2 Student program. We feel very fortunate to have them on our team and they have recently started working with students at their respective high schools.

TRiO Talent Search staff are currently working on meeting with Seniors and tracking who qualifies for "Rigor" coursework within our program. Benefits for our students who complete a track for Rigor coursework include: 1) Being more academically prepared for college, 2) Receiving a "Certificate for Rigor Completion" with our program can be used for scholarship and job applications, and 3) Those students who complete a Rigor track will receive priority for a tuition waiver scholarship (for those attending Weber State).

We are also still hard at work assisting graduated Seniors with enrollment into post secondary education. After learning about the many barriers students can face with this process, our Director provided training in the department on how Advising first generation students differs to a large extent, from other general advising.

This work reminds us that our jobs require "above and beyond" effort, but the results with the students are what drive us and keep us going!
UPWARD BOUND

DAVE, LINDA, KASSIDY & LUCY ARE EXCITED TO CELEBRATE THE COMPLETION OF ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL SUMMER PROGRAM.

The summer program kicked off on Monday, June 10 when 68 students, ten staff, and two drivers loaded two WSU busses and headed for Seattle, Washington! We stopped in Twin Falls, Idaho where students had the opportunity to see base jumpers on the Perrine Bridge. On Tuesday, we stopped to hike Multnomah Falls, visit Fort Clatsop, and eat dinner at Cannon Beach. Wednesday was spent in downtown Seattle, with visits to Pike Place Market, the Space Needle, and the EMP Museum, and in the evening students enjoyed a Mariners game. On Thursday, we visited the Seattle Aquarium and Tillicum Village before heading back toward home. A quick stop at Snoqualmie Falls rounded out Thursday. Friday brought an unexpected twist when one of the busses broke down and was unable to be fixed. Our older students played volleyball and soccer and took in a movie in La Grande, Oregon while Weber State sent up a new bus. A local car dealership, Legacy Ford Lincoln, allowed our program to borrow five 2013 F150s until the Weber State bus arrived.

Students moved into Stewart Wasatch Hall on Sunday, June 16. For the next five weeks, our incoming sophomores, juniors, and seniors attended classes in math, science, American Sign Language, literature and composition, team building, history, financial literacy, art, and technology. Our Bridge students attended Social Problems and Billiards, as well as a writing class and an S.I. period. As part of the evening program, students attended gym and volunteered weekly at the Ogden City Cemetery clearing debris and making the grounds nice. Our students created an anti-bullying seminar and presented it to the students at the Ogden-Weber Boys and Girls Club’s Teen Club. This summer’s activities included a trip to Cabela’s, a ReAL Salt Lake game, hiking Waterfall Canyon, canoeing on the WSU duck pond, dissecting cow hearts, and putting together a fashion show using only recycled materials in art.
It is with mixed emotions that VUB is about to say, “Fare well,” to Jim Shepherd, also known as “Shep”. While we are happy that he will be able to relax and spend more time with his family, VUB is losing a tremendous asset and he will be missed.

Shep began working in Veterans Upward Bound on August 1, 1991, after having worked 13 years teaching Junior High School. He is quoted as saying, “What a wonderful change. In Junior High those students were daring me to teach them. With the vets they are anxious to be taught.”

He continued, “Preparation was emphasized my very first day. A student came in and asked for help with logarithms. In Junior High for 13 years I hadn’t had much occasion to work with logarithms and I had to say so. I told him if he came back the next day I would be ready to help him. I spent the rest of the day reading up on logarithms and doing the problems with the text books I had. That lesson in readiness and admitting it if I wasn’t was one of the best lessons I learned in VUB.”

Jim says this about the program, “VUB – My Opportunity to serve those who served.”

During Shep’s time in VUB the program has been moved to several different office spaces. It began in Annex 10 where the high school Upward Bound program is now. It later moved to Annex 2 that faces onto Birch Ave. Following that it went to the Miller Administration building, the same building the President’s office occupies. And now the program is housed in Annex 12.

The following comes from a self-written page from Shep’s military history and reflects his interest in serving although a physical condition prevented it. Shep’s desire was to be a Marine.

1958 – Registered for the draft and was classified 1Y (eligible in case of national emergency) because I could not turn my left arm over flat (supine position)

1959 – Graduated high school and was a first alternate to go to Annapolis. (The first choice went.)

1959 – Went to the University of California at Los Angelis (UCLA) on a baseball scholarship and joined the Naval Reserve Officers Training Program (NROTC) there. (Everybody had to join one of the ROTC programs. I served there for two years and then had to have brain surgery. When I told my commanding officer he told me that I would be discharged and if I ever asked for benefits I would be court-martialed. After surgery I went back to UCLA for a year, but could no longer qualify for the NROTC program or play baseball.

1965 – Went to Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. While there I talked to the Marine Corps recruiter in Provo but he did not give me much hope of ever qualifying for enlisting.

1967 – Went on a church mission to the Northwestern state mission for two years.

1969 – As I was being released, my mission president at that time was retired Army Colonel Joe Whitesides. He took me to the Marine Corps Recruiting Station in Seattle and encouraged them to give me a chance. They agreed to accept me after some discussion. Then, after my exhilaration that I would be going to boot camp, they had more discussion and came back again and said, “Maybe we should have your doctor’s O.K. first. If he says it is alright then you will be accepted.”

So I went back to the UCLA Neuropsychiatric Institute (NPI) where the surgery had taken place to ask permission from Dr. Richard Walters who had been the doctor in charge of the research project I had taken part in. He said that he didn’t think it would be a good idea. So, I was disappointed once again.

After that I left things alone for a while, but after I started teaching in Ogden, Utah, I decided to try one more time. I talked to the Marine Corps recruiter in Ogden and he said they would still have to have the doctor’s approval. I was sure that was not forthcoming so I called it quits for being a part of the military.

The closest I’ve come to working with the military is working with the vets in the Veterans Upward Bound (VUB) program at Weber State University teaching and tutoring math. One of the great privileges of my life.
FEDERAL DEADLINES FAST APPROACHING
(September 16, 2013)

October 2014 is going to be a critical month. Not only does October 1 mark the beginning of Fiscal Year 2014, but the United States could default on its spending obligations as early as October 18. That is, of course, unless Congress and the White House reach an agreement over how to fund the government in both the short and the long-term.

The situation changes from day to day. On Wednesday, September 11, a government shutdown seemed inevitable. By Monday, September 16, however, news reports indicated that House Republican leadership would rather avoid a government shutdown and instead wage a larger battle over raising the debt ceiling. (You will recall that in order to raise the debt ceiling, Congress and the White House will have to achieve a grand bargain that will have to consist of either tax increases, changes to entitlement programs (Social Security, Medicaid, food stamps, etc.), additional cuts in discretionary spending, or some combination of these.)

Regardless of the ever-changing status of negotiations, one thing is clear — the TRIO community must remain vigilant throughout this process! If we fail to do so, leaders in Washington may cut a deal that, once again, leads to even more dollars lost and even fewer low-income, first-generation students being served! It was the debt ceiling deal of 2011 that lead to sequestration and the 5.23% cut we experienced in FY 2013.

It is critical that all TRIO supporters — staff, students, alumni, etc. — to not only take action themselves but also to recruit FIVE OTHER PEOPLE (co-workers, neighbors, relatives, church members, etc.) and contact your legislators (using COE’s webtool) to loudly proclaim our message.

· In any debt ceiling agreement, Congress MUST end the sequester!
· Congress MUST restore funding for priority programs like TRIO!

We have several tools to help you in making this such outreach...

Contact the Congress — Simply input your address and this webpage will pull up complete contact information for your legislators and also allow you to send them a message

COE Government Relations PowerPoint presentation (.ppt) — The presentation from the 32nd Annual Conference in Chicago, IL featuring all of the most relevant points for your information

TRIO Sequestration Survey (.pdf) — Information about how the sequester has impacted TRIO in terms of students and services lost

COE’s In The News and Multimedia pages — Information about the success of TRIO programs and students

If you ever have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the Government Relations team via e-mail (heather.valentine@coenet.us) and (kimberly.jones@coenet.us), or by phone at (202) 347-7430. Together we will win this fight for our students and programs!