



TS EXPRESS

NEWSLETTER - WINTER 2025

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S RETIREMENT MESSAGE

All good things must come to an end. Having said that, Larry Ramos is retiring from the university on December 31st. Ramos came to the university in 1985 where he began his professional career as a TRIO program counselor for Operation Success (a.k.a Student Support Services).



Promotions Along the Way...

Ramos was promoted to the assistant director's position at TRIO Student Support Services before moving on to become the first director of the McNair Scholars Program – another TRIO program at Wichita State University (WSU). In 2001, he became the TRIO Talent Search Program director where he has been ever since. In 2021, he authored the TRIO Talent Search-South grant application and his title changed to executive director for TRIO Talent Search Programs at WSU.



Future Plans...

Ramos will miss all the students and staff. He will especially miss the beauty of the WSU campus and the feeling he got when the staff met and exceeded their program objectives. After 40 years at WSU, Ramos says, "Time flies when you're having fun!" He will continue in a consultant role for the university but will get to spend a lot of time watching his grandchildren grow up and doing a lot of adventuring, expanding his DIY hobbies, and spending time with his friends and family.



Saying Goodbye

Stephanie Haynes, Middle School Director

This year will be the last year at Talent Search for Middle School Director Stephanie Haynes who began her career at Wichita State University nearly twenty-five years ago as an educational advisor for Project Discovery (known today as TRIO Talent Search), serving West, Southeast, Towne East, Towne West, and Urban League learning centers along with fourteen middle schools. As her journey continued, she was later promoted to the role of middle school director for TRIO Talent Search. Haynes then became responsible for hiring and training tutors, recruiting 291 students from target middle schools (currently Brooks, Gordon Parks, and Mayberry), and overseeing the After School Tutoring Program (ASTP) and Summer Enrichment Program (SEP). Haynes was well-known to students as well as parents and community partners. In 2023, Haynes was honored with the Community Hero award presented by Gordon Parks Academy Principal LaTonya Kennedy and the students presented her with handmade tributes. As a pillar of the community, Haynes also served on the Site Council Committee.



Final Thoughts



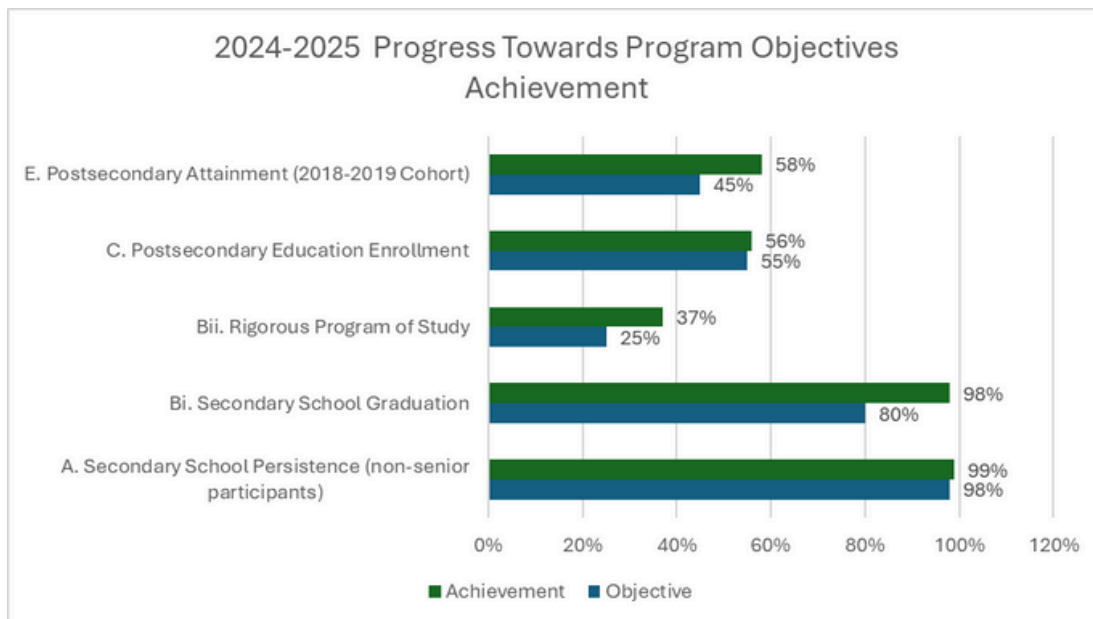
When asked to express her thoughts about her time in education, she said, "I will dearly miss Talent Search staff, Talent Search-South, community partners, and those from the schools I served, but most of all, I will miss the students I worked with over the years. My hope is that I have made a difference in the students I have had the pleasure of working with. Although I feel it is time to retire, I have mixed emotions because I love the work that I do. Nevertheless, I plan to enjoy the rest of my life by traveling and doing whatever else I want to do."

Program Achievements

Mani Souriya, Associate Director/Statistician



Each year, the TRIO Talent Search program submits its Annual Performance Report to the U.S. Department of Education, detailing its objectives and goals. These include Secondary School Persistence (932/940), Secondary School Graduation (218/223), Secondary School Graduation with a Rigorous Program of Study (82/223), Postsecondary Education Enrollment (122/218), and Postsecondary Attainment for the 2018-2019 Cohort (42/72). This data is crucial for evaluating prior experience (PE) points for the grant years between 2022 and 2025, which will contribute to the next grant application. A chart illustrating the goals and achievements of the program for the year 2024-2025 is provided below. All objectives were met and exceeded.



Here For First-Gen

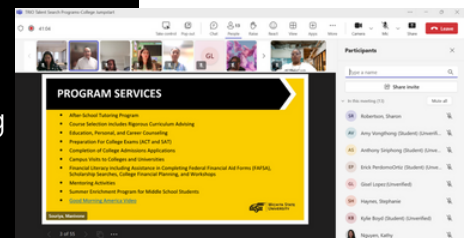
Aunisti Swan, PEA/Mentoring-Career Coordinator

More than half of the Talent Search student population identifies as potential first-generation college students. Talent Search serves at least 67% of first-generation, low-income students per year. A first-generation college student is defined as a person whose legal parent(s) and/or guardian(s) did not complete a 2- or 4-year postsecondary degree program. The mission of the TRIO Talent Search Program is to identify, encourage and assist low-income students to complete a secondary education, enroll in postsecondary education, and complete a postsecondary program. In other words, Talent Search is here to help.



There are several barriers potential first-generation college students may face, including but not limited to gaps in understanding financial aid (loans, scholarships, and grants), how to apply to college, knowledge on the programs offered in college, and “seeing themselves” in a career of interest when they may not have ever seen anyone around them in such positions; hence, the reason why mentorship is an important element to the success of first-generation college students.

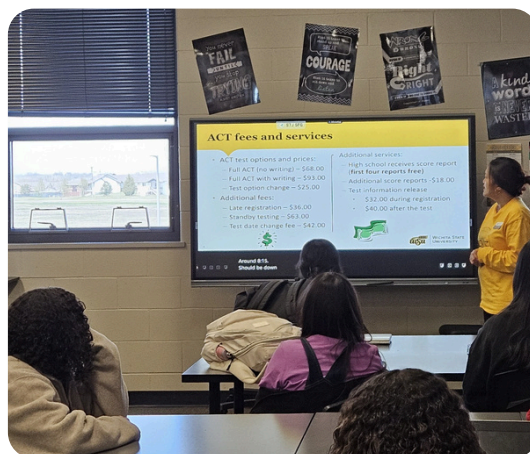
Talent Search Program Educational Advisors guide and mentor potential first-generation college students to help break down the barriers that may be set before them. With every question asked, conversation had, presentation given, and resources provided regarding higher education, they set a foundation for each student to launch from, graduating from high school, and eventually attending college or some other postsecondary education. TS advisors are here to help students with skill development, financial literacy, career guidance, and overall support.



Why Take the ACT?

Thip Phichith, PEA/ACT Coordinator

The ACT is used by most colleges and universities in determining admissions qualifications. The ACT test contains three multiple-choice sections, including English, math and reading. However, science and writing are optional. Some of the colleges and universities will require or accept the ACT science or writing scores, so students may consider taking these optional sections; although, by taking the ACT test, students can save money on tuition. The ACT score can increase their chances of earning scholarships that can help with college costs. Also, taking the ACT makes students more visible to colleges and is an important factor for merit-based scholarship competitions that depend on academic achievement.



TRIO Talent Search is collaborating with PowerPrep to provide the ACT workshop to all participating students. The cost is FREE to all TRIO Talent Search participants and lunch is provided. Remember students to contact a Talent Search advisor about the PowerPrep workshop so that they can assist with the registration process. For more information on the ACT, please visit www.act.org, call 316.978.6754, or email thip.phichith@wichita.edu

ACT PowerPrep Workshop Dates

When: Saturday, February 7, 2026
Monday, June 8, 2026

Where: Wichita State University, Woolsey Hall (Room 110A)

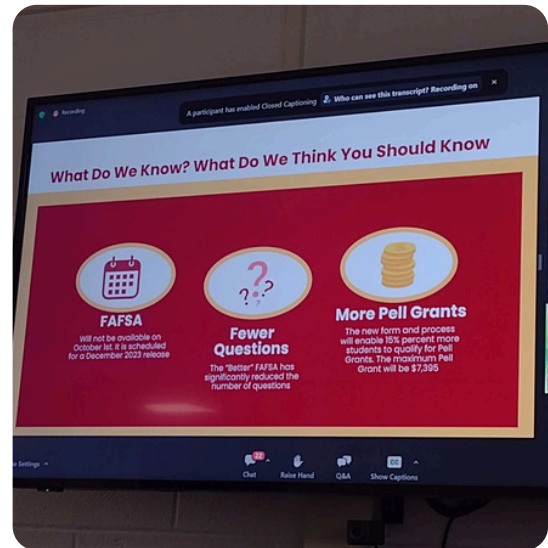
Time: 8:30 a.m.- 2:15 p.m.

FAFSA Season 2026-2027

Emily Roets-Estevez, PEA/Financial Literacy Coordinator

The 2026-2027 Federal Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is now open to graduating high schoolers and is off to a strong start! This version of the FAFSA, called the Better FAFSA, was the first major update to the form in 40 years. First released in December 2023, the first Better FAFSA was not fully functional until the spring semester of 2024, well past the usual October 1 start date. Even after it was widely available, technical glitches prevented many students and their parents/guardians from having their FSA IDs verified and IRS tax data automatically imported to the form, which delayed their college financial award offers. Luckily, many of these glitches have been resolved for this year's FAFSA cycle! Most students and parents/guardians can create their FSA IDs and begin the FAFSA form on the same day rather than waiting 3-5 days for verification like in previous years. The process for inviting parents/guardians to complete their portion of the form has also been streamlined.

To assist as many seniors with the FAFSA as possible, Future Ready Success Coach Rachel Schmeidler at North High School opened the College and Career Center for several evening events this semester. TRIO Talent Search Advisor Emily Roets-Estevez was invited to these events to assist students with completing college applications, financial aid education, and Spanish interpretation services. Throughout the events, nearly 25 seniors and their families were in attendance. Students from several different high schools and a few North/Talent Search alumni returned for FAFSA assistance as well!



North High Senior Night took place on October 7 during Apply Kansas, a three-day period when all colleges and universities in Kansas waive their application fees. After submitting their college applications, students completed their FAFSA's and explored scholarships. Through October 21-22, FAFSA Nights brought in financial aid representatives from WSU Tech and Cowley Community College to help create FSA ID's, complete the FAFSA, and explore additional financial aid options. Talent Search loves serving students at these special events and is grateful to North High School and Schmeidler for all the opportunities she provides seniors to set them up for college success!



**WICHITA STATE
UNIVERSITY**
TRIO Programs
Talent Search



PROGRAM STAFF

Clockwise from Left: Larry Ramos, Executive Director;
Mani Souriya, Associate Director/Statistician;
Stephanie Haynes, Middle School Director;
Thip Phichith, Program Educational Advisor/ACT Coordinator;
Emily Roets-Estevez, Program Educational Advisor/Financial Literacy Coordinator;
Aunisti Swan, Program Educational Advisor/Mentoring & Career Coordinator; and
Sharon K. Robertson, Administrative Specialist

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the TRIO Talent Search program is to identify, encourage, and assist low income and potential first generation college students to complete a secondary education, enroll in post-secondary education, and complete a postsecondary program.

CALENDAR EVENTS

December

- 4 KSU Campus Visit
- 6 SAT Test
- 13 ACT Test
- 22-31 No School | Winter Break
- 25 Christmas
- 31 New Year's Eve

January

- 1-4 No School | Winter Break
- 5 School Reopens | Students Return
- 9 ACT Registration Deadline
- 19 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

February

- 12 No School (Conferences)
- 13 District Inservice | No School
- 14 ACT Test | Valentine's Day
- 16 President's Day | No School
- 27 SAT Registration Deadline

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Funding

Both TRIO Talent Search programs are 100% federally funded by the Department of Education and are hosted by WSU. Funds for 2025-2026 are \$672,135 for TS and \$288,470 for TSS.

Notice of Nondiscrimination

1. Wichita State University (WSU) does not discriminate in its employment practices, or in its educational programs or activities on the basis of age, ancestry, color, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender expression, genetic information, marital status, national origin, political affiliation, pregnancy, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or status as a veteran. WSU also prohibits retaliation against any person making a complaint of discrimination or against any person involved or participating in the investigation of any such allegation. Sexual misconduct, relationship violence, and stalking are forms of sex discrimination and are prohibited under Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972, other federal law, and WSU policy.
2. WSU will not discharge or in any other manner discriminate against employees or applicants because they have inquired about, discussed, or disclosed their own pay or the pay of another employee or applicant. However, employees who have access to the compensation information of other employees or applicants as a part of their essential job functions cannot disclose the pay of other employees or applicants to individuals who do not otherwise have access to compensation information, unless the disclosure is:
 - a. In response to a formal complaint or charge;
 - b. In furtherance of an investigation, proceeding, hearing or action, including an investigation conducted by the University; or
 - c. Consistent with the University's legal duty to furnish the information.