



## Investing And Advocating For All

By Grantley S. Adams

*Investing and Advocating for All* was the theme of CONNTAC, Inc. Board of Directors 51st Annual Breakfast Meeting, which was held on Friday, October 19, 2018. Ms. Dian Brown- Albert, Meeting Chair, stated that this year's theme reflects a commitment to CONNTAC's goal of providing access, training and educational opportunity for all. "This dedication to helping every student realize his/her full potential and meet their educational goals has assisted citizens in gaining the skills

and education needed to prepare them for the real world," she proclaimed.

Dr. Gladys Barbosa Labas, Associate Professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Southern Connecticut State University, gave the Keynote address. In her presentation, Dr. Labas cited several real life examples in which the practice of mentoring/sponsorship was utilized and resulted in positive outcomes for the sponsored. She emphasized that those

who are in positions of authority and influence should recognize the importance of their roles in providing support, mentorship and guidance to those who would benefit most from such sponsorship.

Cecilia Nugent, CONNTAC's Executive Director, presented a review of the organization's accomplishments for the 2017-2018 year. She stated that during that period, CONNTAC Inc. served 3,235 adults and high school seniors through the TRIO Educational Opportunity Center Project. 91% of those participants received assistance with the Financial Aid process, 87% with the Admissions process, and 57%



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## Investing And Advocating For All

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received Financial Literacy education services. Most importantly, over 60% of new college-ready participants enrolled or re-enrolled into a post-secondary program and 50% of documented clients who came into CONNTAC without a high school diploma or GED certificate were referred to a Continuing Education program, from where 48% of those individuals moved on to a post-secondary Educational Program.

Ms. Nugent acknowledged that all of the outreach services are enhanced through the organization's partnership with the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU), where the CONNTAC-EOC Project serves over 340 students in 10 target communities, and CONNTAC, Inc.'s community based agency referrals that provide direct access to students and critical in-kind support and services. Ms. Nugent highlighted the invaluable contributions that CONNTAC staffers make in their work on various committees and initiatives that serve families and adult demographics to pursue higher education. These include involvement in Connecticut's Pell Grant Initiative and local Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAF-

SA) Completion Days, when 1,100 families/students are assisted with the completion of their FAFSA. She recognized staff members, Philhemina Boone and Erica Coleman as this year's R.E.A.P. (Recognizing Exemplary Acts of Performance) award recipients.

The Friend of CONNTAC Award was presented to Alfred L. Carter, Retired Dean of Students (Emeritus), from Manchester Community College. Over his illustrious career, Dean Carter has served as Student Leader, Assistant Professor of Sociology, Program Director, Division Director, Assistant Academic Dean, and Educational Consultant. In his acceptance remarks, Mr. Carter reminisced about the many students he has had the opportunity and privilege to advise, mentor and teach over his 45-year career. He told the audience that he was extremely honored to be named a Friend

of CONNTAC.

In her closing remarks, Annual Meeting Chair, Dian Brown-Albert thanked the audience for its continuing support of CONNTAC, Inc.





## Annual Breakfast Photos



## NEOA Conference 2019 Warwick, Rhode Island

*By Monica Stellmacher*

On April 3, 2019 I entered a banquet hall that was full of persons that had the same passion as I. A room full of people that had similar stories of student success and moments of triumph. We heard testimonies of TRIO alumni who had overcome situations and were now in major leadership roles, committed to making a difference in the lives of others.

Workshops covered everything from how to write, to the required language for student success grants, to how to engage students and parents. Trending tactics on how to motivate students and create cultures of inclusion could be

heard during a forty-five-minute breakout session.

Lobbying and legislative practices were explained, opportunities to promote change were offered. CAEOP shared their successes over the past year and defined the coming year's goals. Local leaders from Connecticut schools shared their concerns for UCONN's TRIO program as Community Colleges questioned future support for TRIO programs.

I met seasoned leaders in TRIO programs from the University of Vermont to MIT, it was a wealth of knowledge and experience over

flowing. The sharing on how to better help the population that we serve was phenomenal, we learned how to help the newly released from prison to the community college student returning to school and how to retain them.

It was an awesome experience to learn from those that have and still are walking the halls of the local EOC's and capture all the innovative ideas to help our population succeed. I learned about my co-workers and saw them at rest, I got questions and understating of the organization and those I work with. It was a great experience, Thank You!





## Best Practices Shared at Regional EOC Meeting

By DeShayla Shelley

Each year the New England Educational Opportunity Association (NEOA) sponsors a regional professional development event for personnel who work with TRIO Educational Opportunity Center (EOC) projects. This year's conference was organized by Connecticut Talent Assistance Cooperative (CONNTAC) staff and held November 1 – 2, 2018 at the Comfort Suites in Norwich, CT.

The conference brings together people who do similar work serving the adult population seeking to enroll into postsecondary education. As such, this event never fails to build strong camaraderie amongst New England's TRIO Educational Opportunity Center personnel who help thousands of adults annually to enroll into post-secondary education programs.

Lead facilitators DeShayla Shelley, Erica Coleman, Allyce Pace, and Philhemina Boone welcomed the 40+ member audience to the two-day event that included bonding and information sharing about higher education topics related to: Understanding the CSS Profile with Michael Light, Assistant Vice President of Enrollment and Director of Financial Aid at Trinity College; Financial Aid Overview and Changes with Kenneth Briggs, Director of Financial Aid at Three Rivers Community College; Resources to Help Undocumented and Immigrant Students with Stefan Keller, Coordinator at CT Students 4 a Dream.

NEOA President, Stephanie Cruz, joined the group to share important updates about the TRIO political climate. During the event, staff discussed and shared best practices on the work and challenges experienced when working with adults trying to enroll or re-enroll in higher education. Participants shared common challenges and

obstacles experienced in the field when helping diverse populations attain higher education. Colleagues also received information about how to relax through yoga from Cecilia Nugent, CONNTAC Executive Director who is also a certified Registered Yoga Teacher (RYT).



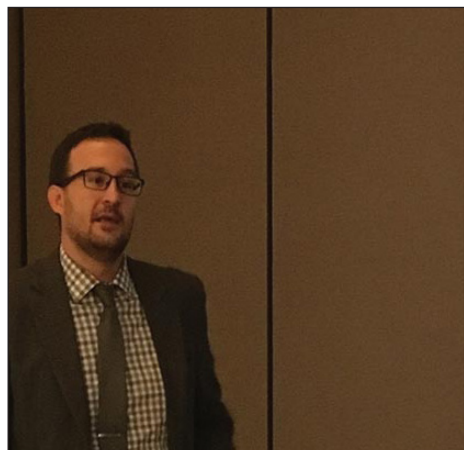
*Attendees of the EOC conference participating in a group activity*



*Attendees of the 2018 EOC Professional Development Conference*

## Best Practices Shared at Regional EOC Meeting

By DeShayla Shelley



*Michael Light, Assistant Vice President of Enrollment and Director of Financial Aid at Trinity College*



*Stephanie Cruz, NEOA President welcoming attendees to the EOC conference*



*Kenneth Briggs, Financial Aid Director at Three Rivers Community College, Presenting at the EOC Conference*



*Erica Coleman, DeShayla Shelley (standing), Philhemina Boone (seated, left) and Allyce Pace, coordinators of the 2018 EOC Professional Development Conference*



*Cecilia Nugent, CONNTAC Executive Director conducting a yoga session*



## 2019 Visit to Capitol Hill

*By: Erica Coleman, Lead Educational Counseling Coordinator*

The Council for Opportunity in Education's 39th Annual Policy Seminar took place March 25- 27, 2019 at the Hyatt Regency Washington, on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. This year's theme was "Building on Our Base, Forging New Connections." Hundreds of TRIO professionals, alumni, and students from across the country made the trip to Washington, D.C. to meet with Members of Congress and engage in meaningful conversations to discuss the value and benefits of supporting Federal TRIO Programs. TRIO is the leading student access and success organization that ensures that low-income, first-generation students are afforded the same educational opportunities as their counterparts. Appreciatively, Congress has provided historic levels of support for the TRIO programs and the hundreds of thousands of low-income, first-generation students served by these programs over the last several years. This support came in the form of a \$60 million funding increase in 2018 and another \$50 million funding increase in 2019.

In our meetings, we asked our Members of Congress to continue to prioritize the academic, financial, and cultural supportive services provided by TRIO and, through a vigorous increase, ensure the continued growth of the programs. The Federal TRIO Programs are the exact programs

which serve as a pathway to the middle class for students across our nation. Therefore, another \$60 million increase in funding would provide a return on investments for our country. Essentially, the higher educational attainment achieved by TRIO students would result in higher earnings, thus increased economic outcomes and taxes paid for the nation. The funding increase would be a win/win for everyone!

The Congressmen and Congresswomen of Connecticut are very familiar with TRIO programs, and they believe in and support the mission. We met with all seven

Congressional educational aides, and even a few of CT's Members of Congress on Wednesday, March 27, 2019. Fortunately, none of them gave us an ounce of push-back or uncertainty. They all agreed to support the suggested funding increase for TRIO in the 2020 fiscal year. It is reassuring to know that we elect legislators who understand the power and significance of TRIO programs in the same way that we do. Ultimately, the fact that "TRIO Works" is undeniable. The heights that Federal TRIO programs, and more importantly, the students within TRIO will soar are limitless!



*CONNTAC Staff Gloria Dover (far right) and Erica Coleman(2nd from left) meeting with Congressman Joe Courtney.*

## My Experience Presenting Financial Literacy 101 Workshop Series

By *Samantha Goyzueta, Educational Counselor – Waterbury*

Since I began my tenure with CONNTAC, Inc. I have had the opportunity to offer the Financial Literacy 101 Workshop Series. Based on the Money Matters Module, an FDIC (Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation) Money Smart Tool, this 60 to 90-minute presentation allows CONNTAC Educational Opportunity Center staff to provide attendees with strategies to track daily spending habits, prepare personal spending plans, decrease spending, and identify budgeting tools that will help them manage their income. We also talk about Credit Card Smarts and the pitfalls they may encounter while managing debt associated with the use of credit cards.

When I was first introduced to the material, I was surprised to learn how much I did not know about Financial Literacy. I was not exposed to it in high school and I was too busy in college to take classes on finances. Presenting the workshops challenged me to learn more about the subject. Answering participant inquiries fueled my desire to question why the subject is not taught and incorporated earlier in classroom curriculum.

Recent Harris Interactive poll results show that an increased

number of adults feel financial literacy should be taught in high schools. As someone who is trained to provide these outreach services I am becoming a stronger advocate and presenter of Financial Literacy for agencies and students within my service area. As I grow through CONNTAC, my understanding of Financial Literacy strengthens and I am becoming a better presenter and educator for students and community members. I encourage you to contact one of our counselors today to learn more about our free Financial Literacy service and how we can collectively help students better manage their finances

for their own social and economic empowerment.

**Visit us online for information on the latest scholarship recipients and how to donate!**

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