

News Release

South Seattle Community College

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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South's TRIO Grant Refunded

\$1.5 million federal grant enables college to continue providing critical student services.

South Seattle Community College's TRiO-Student Support Services (SSS) grant has been refunded by the US Department of Education for the period 2010-2015. This is good news for the 200+ South students served each year under the grant, which provides a comprehensive array of intensive academic support services to low-income, first-generation, or disabled college students.

College transfer student Linda M. Graham is among the more than 3,800 students who have benefitted from TRiO-SSS in the two decades that South has been funded. As the third youngest of 10 children, she is excited about becoming the first in her family to graduate from college and setting a positive example for her younger siblings, nieces, and nephews.

Her path to an associate's degree has not been easy, however. Now 20, Linda earned a GED at the age of 16, and for several years thereafter remained unsure and confused about how to shape her future.

"I knew I wanted to be someplace else, but didn't know how to get there," she explained.

After enrolling at South, she learned about TRiO-SSS from a friend and became an enthusiastic participant, availing herself of the tutoring services, academic advising and assistance in finding scholarship resources. The staff even arranged a day at the University of Washington, where Linda had a one-on-one meeting with the director of the School of Social Work and was shown around by former TRiO students now attending the UW.

An active student leader who will receive her AA degree at the end of fall quarter, Linda learned what university life was like and what it would take academically to pursue a career as social worker.

"It was an enriching experience," she said of the UW field trip. "It really gave me an extra push and inspired me even more. It was a reality check and now I know it is possible. I see my future at hand."

TRiO programs were established by the federal government in 1965, to “identify and provide services for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds.” According to Maureen Shadair, TRiO-SSS director and interim dean of Enrollment and Student Services, South students who participate in TRiO-SSS are retained, graduate, and transfer at significantly higher rates than non-participants. In the period 2008-2009, for example, 86% of TRiO-SSS participants graduated from South, transferred to a four-year institution, or re-enrolled at the college. In addition, 92% of TRiO-SSS participants earned a 2.0 GPA or higher, with 64% earning a 3.0+ GPA.

But Linda Graham, and TRiO-SSS students like her, are much more than numbers. With the help of a caring, encouraging, and supportive staff, they are all on their way to “someplace else,” where academic and personal achievement are realized.

“It can be as simple as having someone to talk to,” explained Linda. “Sometimes I go in the office feeling not so great and I talk to someone and, by the time I leave, I feel terrific.”

And that’s what really counts.

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Linda M. Graham