The Beggs Ballroom, splashed in red, yellow, and orange, provided the backdrop for one of the biggest events of the year—the 2016 National TRIO Day recognition banquet. Held the evening of February 11, the annual event affords the Office of Special Programs (OSP), and all of the TRIO and GEAR UP departments under OSP, to recognize students for their accomplishments and community partners for their steadfast support. More than 250 people attended the banquet with the majority of attendees being program students and their families. University administrators, faculty and staff, congressional staffers, and community liaisons were also invited to join the celebration.

University President John Bardo, Ph.D., reverberated the huge impact that the TRIO and GEAR UP programs had on the community and said the programs have been a “shining beacon and gateway” for students to enter the university. “Where would young people be, if not for the opportunities given to them (students) through TRIO?” he asked. He received a resounding applause of approval when he announced that he would be joining the Urban League’s board of directors. The president also thanked Deltha Q. Colvin, associate vice president for Student Affairs and the staff for their work with students and congratulated the students on their recognition.

Prior to the banquet, a VIP reception was held in the Gridley Room of the Rhatigan Student Center. Honored guests included the student achievers and Building Bridges awardees. Colvin began the evening’s proceedings by welcoming the audience and talking about how proud she is of the OSP staff and the work they do to strengthen schools and the community. Her message to students was “be the best that you can possibly be.” Colvin recounted the success of the programs in producing numerous doctors, lawyers, politicians, coaches, and teachers. Her remarks were inspirational for students and gracious to the program staffs.

The accolades kept pouring in when Eric Sexton, Ph.D., vice president for Student Affairs, took to the podium and offered his congratulations to the students being honored. He related that the celebration of National TRIO Day should inspire those who are called to help students become successful, to serve as stewards for low income and first generation college students. City Council Member LaVonta Williams spoke on behalf of Mayor Kevontrez Jones is a McNair Scholar and aerospace engineering student at Wichita State. During the 2014-2015 academic year, he researched fiber architecture effects on the stress relaxation behavior of carbon fiber composites under the guidance of Suresh Raju, Ph.D., associate professor for the Department of Aerospace Engineering. Jones presented his findings at the 20th Annual Closing Symposium. He will graduate May 2016, and plans to begin a doctoral program in theoretical and applied mechanics in the fall.
Jeff Longwell and glowingly articulated how the TRIO programs are preparing Wichita’s workforce of tomorrow. Williams also read a proclamation from the Mayor recognizing February 11, 2016 as National TRIO Day.

After the Governor’s and university’s proclamations were read by Kaye Monk-Morgan, director of Upward Bound Math Science and Martha Lewis, director of Disability Support Services, the buffet dinner followed. Smooth jazz sounds by Contemp-Oh! Band, along with delicious Italian cuisine, provided a wonderful environment that was rated highly by the audience according to evaluations summarized by Alan Dsouza, Ph.D. and the evaluation committee.

The keynote address was delivered by USD 259 Board of Education President Betty Arnold. Her speech was passionate and thought-provoking as she took the audience on a historical journey from her upbringing in Arkansas to her time in Wichita. She said it was difficult for people who faced discrimination on a daily basis living in the South. But, she also related that Kansas had discriminatory laws on the books in 1874, even if those laws weren’t enforced. While a student at Wichita State, she said “a fire was ignited” to become more informed and involved in the issues that mattered to her. She

Lilia Marquez is a TRIO director’s dream student. She has made an impact on the Upward Bound Math Science program (UBMS) that will be felt for years to come. Marquez is a leader and a great role model. She has volunteered to work with new students to help with transition issues and mentored new student research groups. Marquez plans to attend Wichita State and major in aerospace engineering. Through UBMS, she has already created a relationship with the chair of aerospace engineering as well as some key staff at the National Institute for Aviation Research.
thought more about the meaning of her time in Arkansas and the treatment of African Americans during those tumultuous times. The audience was engaged as she concluded her talk about the value of a public education. “Students are accepted in public schools in spite of their background. Everyone is welcome,” she declared. Her final piece of advice was aimed directly to the students when she challenged them to “dare to be the reality.”

Educational Opportunity Centers Program Executive Director Frances Ervin led the student achievement proceedings by introducing each recipient and sharing a brief biography. As the students made their way to the stage to receive their awards, the program directors and Associate Vice President Colvin stood in solidarity with the students to congratulate and support their tremendous accomplishments. Many of the student achievers brought their families with them to the banquet to witness the award and share in the experience. Student achievers and the program that selected them include:

- Christian Carter, Kansas Kids @ GEAR UP
- Moriah Carter, Communication Upward Bound
- Richard Dang, South Wichita GEAR UP
- Mark Guzman, Upward Bound Wichita Prep
- Aiysha Henagan, Educational Opportunity Centers Program
- Kevontrez Jones, McNair Scholars Program
- Tina Le, Student Support Services
- Trang Le, Educational Talent Search
- Lilia Marquez, Upward Bound Math Science
- Melanie Martinez, North Wichita GEAR UP
- Richard Rangel, Veterans Upward Bound
- Carrie VanDusen, Disability Support Services

Tina Le graduated from Wichita State University in Fall 2015 with a degree in nursing and is working as a registered nurse at Via Christi. She was a Student Support Services (SSS) participant during her entire college career. Le says, “SSS helped me achieve my dreams of being the first college graduate in my family by presenting me with scholarships, use of a computer lab, access to tutoring, and monthly meetings with my SSS advisor for moral and academic support.” Last year, Le received the $2,000 Spirit AeroSystems scholarship from SSS.
Each year, OSP recognizes individuals from the community who provide invaluable support to the programs. This year, the entire USD 259 Board of Education was chosen to receive the Building Bridges Award. Vic Chavez, executive director of South Wichita GEAR UP, introduced each board member and invited each of them to receive a plaque from Colvin. The following individuals received these prestigious awards:

- **John Allison**, USD 259 Superintendent
- **Betty Arnold**, School Board President, District 1 Representative
- **Joy Eakins**, District 2 Representative
- **Barbara Fuller**, District 3 Representative
- **Jeff Davis**, District 4 Representative
- **Mike Rodee**, Vice President, District 5 Representative
- **Lynn Rogers**, District 6 Representative
- **Sheril Logan**, At Large Board Member

The evening ended with Colvin recognizing each project director and thanking the audience for making the event an evening to remember. In return, and much to her surprise, Colvin was presented with a bouquet of flowers from the OSP directors to show their appreciation for the work she does and the support she provides to all the programs. The positive responses received on the evaluations returned by the attendees reflected that the evening was a success.

Staff Sgt. Richard Rangel, a Veterans Upward Bound student, has had a momentous and diverse experience serving in the U.S. Army around the world including Iraq and Afghanistan. Staff Sgt. Rangel served in multiple career positions ranging from infantry team, squad leader, vehicle commander, field support command platoon sergeant to cadre for warrior transition units. After Staff Sgt. Rangel retired, he decided to help others, especially veterans. He attends Wichita State, majoring in social work and his goal is to obtain a master’s degree specializing in post traumatic stress disorder therapy.