A Time to Celebrate

Wichita State University’s Office of Special Programs (OSP) hosted its annual National TRIO Day celebration on Feb. 12, 2015 with more than 200 people in attendance. Although the national keynote speaker was unable to join the celebration due to illness, the planning committee did an outstanding job of rearranging the day’s activities on short notice. The planned Town Hall meeting was ultimately canceled but all other events took place as planned with minimal disruption.

The planning for National TRIO Day began one year in advance, spearheaded by Associate Vice President for Student Affairs Deltha Q. Colvin. She opened the program agenda by welcoming the audience to the celebration. She commended the “outstanding work” that OSP programs do with students and the significant impact that the programs have had on a national level. She also recognized that the Upward Bound program was founded in 1964 and is celebrating 50 years.

Vice President for Student Affairs Wade Robinson, Ph.D. provided welcoming remarks on behalf of the university and congratulated Colvin for the success the programs have experienced under her leadership. The Honorable Mayor of Wichita Carl Brewer read the City of Wichita Proclamation declaring National TRIO Day and made brief comments on the exceptional leadership style of Colvin. He mentioned a recent trip to South Africa in which a Wichita delegation met with leaders in that country and how Colvin helped keep the group on task and on schedule. The comments drew some irony laughter from the audience as the mayor was pointing out that he wasn’t as cognizant of the schedule as perhaps he might have been.

Kaye Monk-Morgan, director of Upward Bound Math Science Center read the proclamation from Wichita State while Martha Lewis, director of Disability Support Services read Governor Sam Brownback’s proclamation. Kennedy Musamali, director of Student Support Services, recognized special guests including legislative aides from the offices of Senator Pat Roberts and Senator Jerry Moran. Other special guests included university administrators and community leaders. Riccardo Harris, director of North Wichita GEAR UP, delivered words of inspiration prior to dinner being served. During dinner a video, produced by Grady Landrum, director of Disability Services was shown while the jazzy sounds of Contemp–Oh! played live. The group is led by TRIO alum, Hal Cozart.

“I was amazed at the level of participation from the institution and the community.”
– Kennedy Musamali (SSS)
“I enjoyed seeing the award winners and hearing their stories of success!”
– Richard Schwasinger (KKGU)

After dinner, LaWanda Holt-Fields, director of the McNair Scholars program, introduced the keynote speaker Virdena Gilkey, executive assistant to the mayor. Prior to her introduction, Mayor Brewer approached the podium and presented Gilkey with a gift and several kind words that expressed his deep appreciation for the work that Gilkey has done during his tenure as mayor. Gilkey’s speech was motivational, encouraging, and inspirational. She congratulated the students who were being honored and told them to not let anything get in their way of their dreams. She advised students to trust in a higher power and not always the folks who say one thing but their actions differ from what they say. Her message was powerful and many people in the audience could not hold back their emotional responses to her words.

Since Arnold Mitchem, Ph.D. was not able to be present, he sent his remarks on video and reminded the audience of the struggles of TRIO and its longevity. He expressed his sincere appreciation for being honored and that the award “gives me an additional spark to return to the work to advance and expand educational opportunities.” He commended Wichita State for having nine TRIO programs and praised Colvin’s “no nonsense course” of leadership throughout the years on behalf of students.

Frances Ervin, director of Educational Opportunity Centers and Rhonda Hicks, director of Upward Bound Wichita Prep led the TRIO Student Achievement Awards portion of the program. Eleven students, nominated and selected by each of the OSP programs, were recognized for their remarkable accomplishments as a participant in the respective programs.

The students honored included Aleeya Hubbard-Kinard (Communication Upward Bound), Lydia Ibarra (McNair Scholars Program), Sage Lawrence (Disability Support Services), Tin Le (Talent Search), Amber McAnulla (Veterans Upward Bound), RayJhaun Perkins (Kansas Kids @ GEAR UP), Ali Rajabi (Office of Disability Services), Juan Santiago (Educational Opportunity Centers), Andrew Sengchanh (Student Support Services), Zane Storlie (Upward Bound Math Science Center), and Simeon Willis (Upward Bound Wichita Prep). A brief bio of the student was read and each student awarded a medallion by Colvin along with the program director. It was a moving experience and all the students expressed deep gratitude for the recognition.

Virdena Gilkey pushes message to do “whatever it takes to be successful”

Student Achievers, left to right, RayJhaun Perkins (KKGU), Sage Lawrence (DSS), Aleeya Hubbard-Kinard (CUB), Lydia Ibarra (McNair), Amber McAnulla (VUB) and Zane Storlie (UBMS)
Shukura Bakari-Cozart, director of Veterans Upward Bound, Larry Ramos, director of Talent Search, Wilma Moore-Black, associate director of Communication Upward Bound, Vic Chavez, executive director of South Wichita GEAR UP, and Wade Robinson presented the TRIO Advocacy and Building Bridges honorees. Colvin accepted Arnold Mitchem’s award on his behalf and Gilkey received hers from Colvin. Gilkey was humbled by the award and exhibited great enjoyment in being an honoree.

Corinne Nilsen, director of Kansas Kids @ GEAR UP and Richard Armstrong, Ph.D., director of Communication Upward Bound, introduced each OSP program staff. Alan Dsouza, Ph.D., instructed the audience to complete evaluations and Colvin ended the event with closing comments and recognitions. A special moment was calling all OSP directors to join her on stage to accept a medallion honoring them for their commitment and service to the students.

“The event also paid tribute to a true TRIO Trailblazer, Ms. Deltha Q. Colvin. Her hard work shows in that the special programs at WSU continue to grow, providing services to disadvantaged students at all levels.”

– Hercilia Thompson (OSP)

Preparing for 2015 National TRIO Day

The primary planning committee included the directors of all programs under OSP. Twenty coordinating committees made up of OSP staff met for months to work out all the large and small details of the event. Each committee arrived at the Rhatigan Student Center midafternoon to decorate, set up, and help out where needed. The Ezine committee coordinated photo sessions of individuals and groups. One of the best group photos was of the TRIO alumni who now work as OSP professionals. Another photo that drew praise was of the entire OSP staff. OSP departments include TRIO programs: Communication Upward Bound, Disability Support Services, Educational Opportunity Centers, McNair Scholars Program, Student Support Services, Talent Search, Upward Bound Math-Science,

(Continued on page 7)
Upward Bound Wichita Prep, and Veterans Upward Bound. OSP also includes three Gaining Early Awareness & Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP): Kansas Kids @ GEAR UP, North Wichita GEAR UP, and South Wichita GEAR UP. The Office of Disability Services and nine College Access Challenge Grants round out the programs under OSP.

At 5:00pm, a VIP reception began in the Gridley Room. Student honorees, university administrators, community members, and other special guests were invited to attend. The reception was a grand affair with many individuals commenting how elegant the newly renovated venue was. Indeed, the Don and Shirley Beggs Ballroom and the adjoining Gridley Room are lavish facilities to hold events such as National TRIO Day. In addition, the Venters Room was utilized to conduct interviews and conduct photo shoots of the various individuals in attendance. Once in the ballroom, the stage area was decorated with the banners of each program accented by the tables sporting the event’s theme colors of copper and black. In honor of Abraham Lincoln’s birthday, pennies were strewn about each table.

The event ended and all attendees left feeling good about their experience and with a much better understanding of what TRIO means to the students, university, community and the nation. Hopefully, these good feelings will translate into new advocates who can speak highly and knowledgeable of the programs with friends, family, co-workers, decision makers, and community leaders. If this occurs, then National TRIO Day accomplished its mission.