



TS EXPRESS

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



Congratulations students on completing another semester of school. Now that December is here and a new year is looming around the corner, it might be a great time for reflection on how to make future improvements. These improvements could be academic, social, or personal. The real challenge is making a commitment to change. For most people, change is hard even if the change is beneficial. If a student wants to become a better student, they should try to improve in small, manageable steps. Set realistic, attainable goals. For example, if the goal is to spend more time doing homework, the student could add an extra five minutes each week until the desired study time is accomplished. This will allow the larger goal to be reached in a reasonable timeframe instead of trying to tackle everything all at once. For 2024, set long-term goals, but break them into smaller short-term goals. Short-term goals are easier to achieve and accomplishing them brings students closer to the long-term goal. It also adds momentum and a sense of accomplishment, improving confidence. Good luck and happy holidays!

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Student Spotlight: Lalita

- Thip Phichith, Program Educational Advisor/ACT-SAT Coordinator

Lalita is a senior attending Derby High School. She has been in TRIO Talent Search since the eighth grade. In the years that she has been with the program, Lalita has received academic counseling and support and opportunities to tour various colleges in Kansas, attend financial literacy workshops, and participate in the iDigTRIO Biological STEM conference where she was flown to Florida with a few other TRIO students for an all-expense paid visit to the University of Florida.

After high school, Lalita hopes to attend Georgia Tech to study aerospace engineering. Lalita has mentioned that TRIO has encouraged students to go to college allowing them to succeed in life. The program also offers resources for students to get the financial aid needed to go to college. Lalita is grateful for being a part of TRIO and incredibly thankful to all of those who have helped her to accomplish her goals.

A few of Lalita's accomplishments so far are starting a gardening club at her school and volunteering as a member of the National Honors Society. Lalita's weighted GPA is a 4.3, ACT score of 28, and she ranks 10 out of 487 students in her class. Outside of school, she likes to draw and play the guitar.

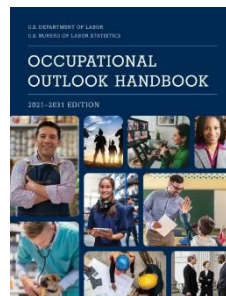


Reflection for Seniors

- Suresh Menon, Program Educational Advisor/Mentoring-Career Coordinator

Congratulations to all the seniors approaching their last semester before graduation. High school marks the last four years of required schooling by the State of Kansas. The next stage of learning is truly voluntary but important in becoming the best version of themselves. Listed below are some reflection questions that were taken from the article, “27 Questions You Should Be Asking Your Senior Year of High School” by author Aric Mitchell.

- **What are the courses necessary to graduate?**
 - Seniors are advised to schedule a meeting with a guidance counselor immediately to ensure graduation requirements are met and that they are on the right path to graduate.
 - An impressive number of high schools throughout the U.S. currently offer free college courses to actively enrolled high school students so that students can earn a high school diploma and an associate degree or some form of technical certification at the same time. Ask an advisor about it.
- **What is the best choice for post-secondary education and preparing for the future?**
 - Four-year college is not the only alternative. There are technical colleges, study-abroad opportunities, trade schools, military service, and more.
 - Consider community college. Mitchell says, “Community college may not seem [ideal] to students in their senior year of high school, but it is much cheaper than a four-year school and allows students to finish general education requirements before ever stepping up to the more expensive institutions.”
 - If unsure which direction to go, seek advice from high school counselors, teachers, educational/career advisors, and professionals within the community in the field of interest.
 - Listen to podcasts on subjects of interest to gain exposure to different viewpoints and options that could help in the next step of the decision-making process.
- **What is the financial plan?**
 - According to Mitchell, now more than ever before, there is less and less money in education leading to more competitiveness with winning scholarships. As a result, students need to be more mindful about money matters and financial aid. Apply for scholarships if there is even a slim chance of qualifying. Send thank you cards or letters to show appreciation to donors.
 - Also, consider student loans (check terms and interest fees) or other government assistance to help pay for tuition, fees, and books for each semester. Fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to apply for a Pell Grant to see if there is money available that doesn't have to be repaid.
 - Consider attending community college for the first two years and transferring to a publicly funded state university (four-year college) for the last two years and digging a little deeper for other scholarship opportunities.
- **Will there be a need for the student's chosen field ten years from now?**
 - Do some research at the local library.
 - Check out the Occupational Outlook Handbook.
- **How can students begin networking?**
 - Start building and establishing healthy relationships with adults within the community (church/temple, school, or work) who are already employed in the desired industry to aid in making informed career decisions and connections that could lead to job referrals or interviews.
 - Mitchell suggests, “Take some time to get to know these people, what they do, and what their journey was like to get there. The more face-to-face—rather than Facebook-to-Facebook—connections that you can make now, the better equipped you'll be to land a job after high school and when college is over.”
 - Attend career fairs or networking events related to a specific career cluster, visit a worksite, job shadow, or intern in a position.

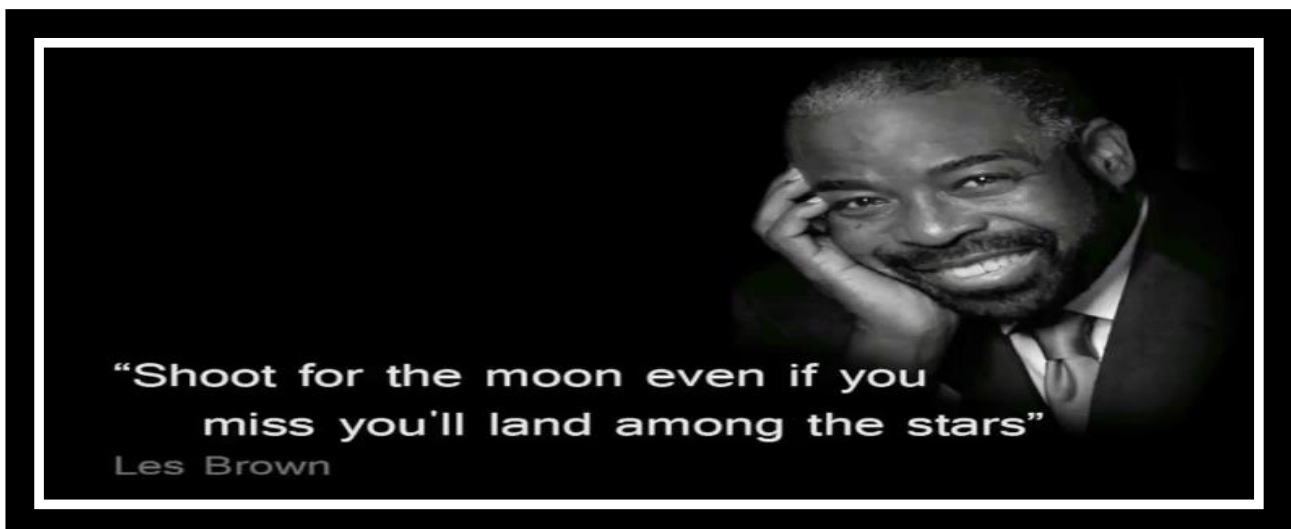


- **What are the student's marketable skills and how can they be monetized?**
 - Take self-assessment and career exploration tests to determine strengths and transferable job skills that would be useful to a future employer.
 - According to Mitchell, "Technical schools as well as online education programs that teach marketable skills usually involve technology and are picking up steam as the world increasingly becomes a skills-based economy. The key is to know who you are, what you're good at, and what you enjoy doing."
 - If a student is passionate about a skill or an idea that can be marketed and earn income, then it is worth pursuing. According to Mitchell, "People are currently monetizing the things that they enjoy doing. A look at the rapidly growing podcast community is one example of how you can turn passion projects and hobbies into viable forms of income through premium subscriptions, advertising, or a mix of both." **Be forewarned:** *It is best to steer clear of ideas that could lead to painful situations, regret, or trouble with the law.*

- **Is the student ready for a job interview?**
 - Learn how to build a strong resume and boost job interview etiquette to become a better candidate. These skills can help students prepare for their next job, college admissions application, and scholarship application.
 - Engage the help of a career counselor, teacher, or Talent Search advisor.

- **Are the student's inner circle of friends "good quality?"**
 - Friends can be good job references and provide referrals, but as the saying goes, one must watch the company that they keep because friends can also be a good or bad influence on a person's behavior and reputation. In the words of motivational speaker Les Brown, "Practice surrounding yourself with Only Quality People (OQP)."
 - Good quality friends can boost confidence, encourage healthy behaviors, and provide support. Choose those who are trustworthy, dependable, and loyal. These types of friends help a person become the best version of themselves.

- **How are their time management skills?**
 - Everyone has 24 hours per day, which amounts to 168 hours per week. When time is managed wisely, goals can be accomplished with time left over for leisure activities.
 - Practice using a school planner or seek help from a counselor on how to obtain and use one. It can help students become more organized and responsible which are transferrable job skills.



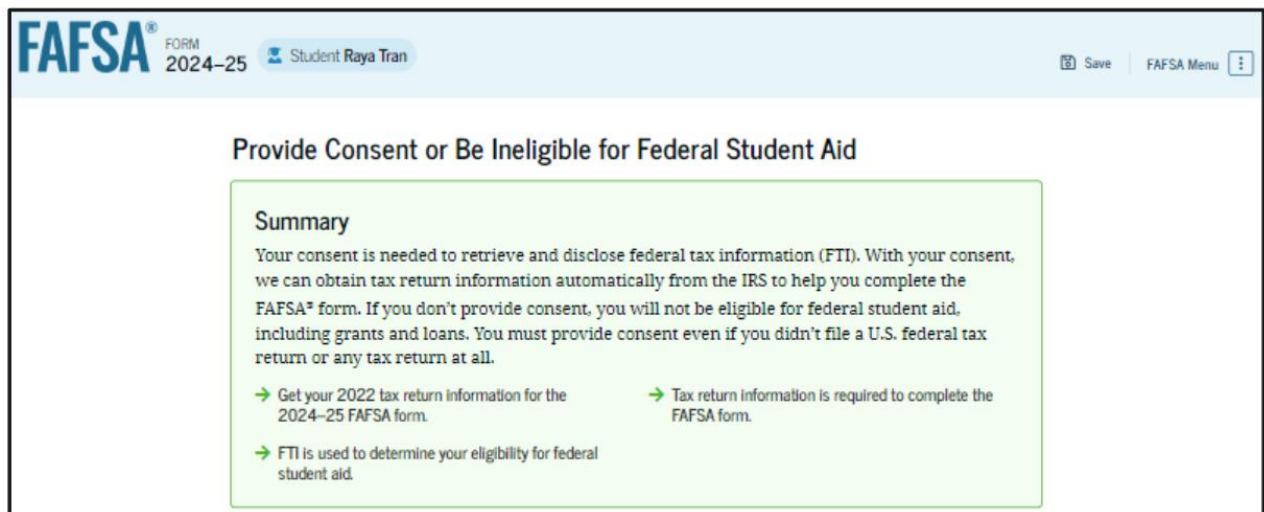
The New Better FAFSA

- Emily Roets-Estevez, Program Educational Advisor/Financial Literacy Coordinator

College-bound students may be eligible for one of two types of aid from the federal government to help pay for their educational expenses - federal student loans or grants. Students must pay back any student loans they take out with interest. Students do NOT have to pay back grants. One type of grant that students who are considered low-income may qualify for is the Pell Grant, which is up to \$7,395 per year.

To be eligible to receive these funds, also called federal student aid, each student must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The class of 2024 will be the first class to complete the *Better FAFSA*, which is the first FAFSA update in 40 years. This update includes new terminology and processes. The exact date that the FAFSA will be available this year has not yet been released, but it will open by December 31, 2023.

Important things to know: The student will answer questions to see who else needs to enter information on the FAFSA form. These individuals are called “contributors” and could be a student’s parents, stepparents, or legal guardians. The student and each contributor will need to create an FSA ID before beginning the FAFSA form. The FSA ID is a username and password that serves as each contributor’s legal electronic signature. The student and each contributor must provide consent on the FAFSA form to automatically obtain tax return information from the IRS. If the student or any contributor does NOT give consent, the student will NOT be eligible for any form of federal student aid other than Direct Unsubsidized Loans. Not providing consent would also make students ineligible for the Pell Grant. Even students and contributors who do not file taxes have to give consent. Students and parents can reach out to their TRIO Talent Search representative any time with questions about the FAFSA form.



The image is a screenshot of the FAFSA 2024-25 form interface. At the top left, it says "FAFSA FORM 2024-25" and "Student Raya Tran". At the top right, there are "Save" and "FAFSA Menu" buttons. The main heading is "Provide Consent or Be Ineligible for Federal Student Aid". Below this is a green-bordered box titled "Summary" containing the following text: "Your consent is needed to retrieve and disclose federal tax information (FTI). With your consent, we can obtain tax return information automatically from the IRS to help you complete the FAFSA* form. If you don't provide consent, you will not be eligible for federal student aid, including grants and loans. You must provide consent even if you didn't file a U.S. federal tax return or any tax return at all." Below the summary text are three bullet points: "→ Get your 2022 tax return information for the 2024-25 FAFSA form.", "→ FTI is used to determine your eligibility for federal student aid.", and "→ Tax return information is required to complete the FAFSA form."

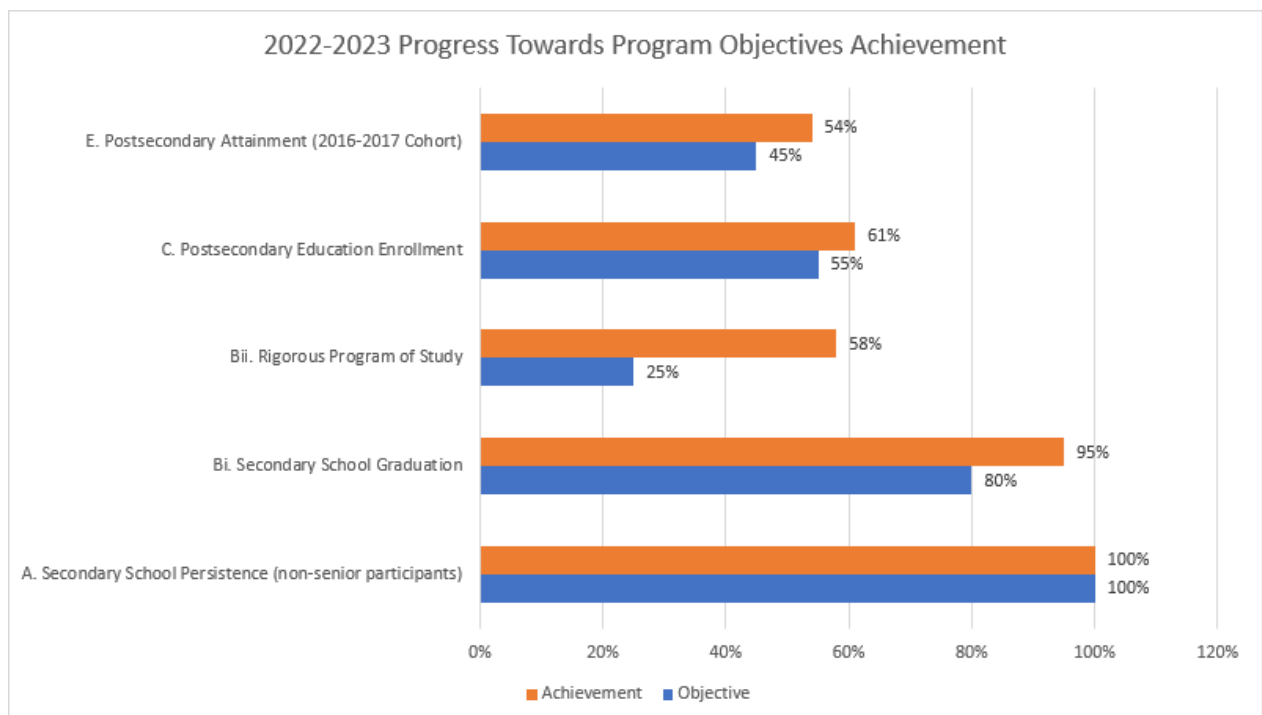
*Image from the 2024-2025 FAFSA form explaining the consent process.

Program Objective Results for 2022-2023

- Mani Souriya, Associate Director/Statistician



Every year, the TRIO Talent Search program submits the Annual Performance Report to the U.S. Department of Education which includes the program objectives and goals: Secondary School Persistence; Secondary School Graduation, Secondary School Graduation with Rigorous Program of Study, Postsecondary Education Enrollment, and Postsecondary Attainment, which are used to assess prior experience (PE) points in years 2022-2023, 2023-2024, and 2024-2025 to be awarded points to the 2026-2031 grant proposal. Below is a chart that demonstrates data for program objective goals and achievements for program year 2022-2023. As shown, the program achieved or exceeded all objectives!



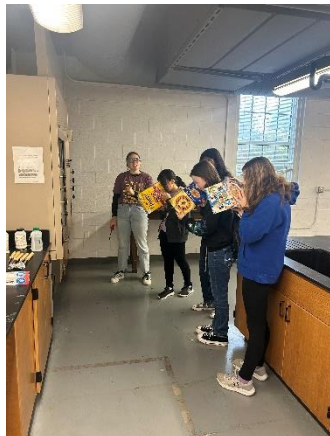


Expanding Your Horizons

- Stephanie Haynes, Middle School Director



On Saturday, October 28, 2023, community leaders partnered with Wichita State University to host the Expanding Your Horizons (EYH) STEM Conference. This one-day event promoted STEM for middle school girls, helping them learn more about careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). They participated in fun, exciting hands-on activities and interacted with experienced WSU professionals in STEM careers who volunteered to be role models. Students heard from keynote speaker Clarice Phelps, an American nuclear chemist researching the processing of radioactive transuranic elements at the U.S. Department of Energy's Oak Ridge National Laboratory. Participants also attended three interactive workshops to explore and learn. This included workshops on solar spectra (studying outer space through light), creatures in the classroom (examining different types of reptiles, turtles, and snakes) and forecasting fundamentals (building an ammeter which measures wind speed). At the end of the workshop, attendees received lunch, a t-shirt, a WSU backpack, and other prizes. The girls who attended thoroughly enjoyed the conference and the opportunity.



Mental Health Matters

- Sharon K. Robertson, Administrative Specialist



According to the World Health Organization, one in seven 10–19-year-olds experiences a mental disorder and the more risk factors they are exposed to, the greater the risk of a mental breakdown. Contributing factors may include uncomfortable or impoverished living conditions, abuse (sexual violence, bullying, online attacks), pressure to conform to peers, identity crisis, adversity, discrimination, or exclusion. For some, a lack of support or coping with a disability or behavioral disorder could prove to be a strain on their mental health. Source: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/adolescent-mental-health>

Whatever the case, it is not necessary to suffer alone. Do not rely on alcohol, drugs, or other self-harming vices. Help is available. Talk to a Talent Search advisor for more resources or try one of the following.

COMCARE

A Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic
316-660-9605 | 350 S. Broadway, Wichita, KS 67202

Health Outreach Prevention and Education (HOPE) Services #WSUWeSupportU

Promoting wellness; preventing suicide, sexual violence, and substance misuse
988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline | Text HOME to 741741 (Crisis Text Line) | Suspenders4Hope website

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

In a crisis, call or text 988 | 1-800-950-6264 | Text “Helpline” to 62640 |

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline | <https://988lifeline.org/>

Trevor Lifeline for the LGBTQ+ Community

1-866-488-7386 | Text START to 678678 | <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/>

Wichita Area Sexual Assault Center

316-263-0185 | 355 N. Waco Ave. #100, Wichita, KS 67202

Other places to get help:

- **Crisis Hotlines** – Do an online search for your state and “crisis hotline.”
- **Emergency Rooms** – Local hospital or urgent care centers. **Call 911.**
- **Local Crisis Centers** - Search online by typing into the search bar, terms like “crisis center,” “crisis counseling center,” “psychiatric emergency services,” or “crisis intervention.”

Source: <https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/crisis-support.html>

Calendar Events

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.

TRIO Talent Search

Wichita State University
Office of Special Programs
Division of Academic Affairs
1845 Fairmount, Campus Box 96
Wichita, KS 67260-0096
Office: 316.978.3127 | Fax: 316.978.3527
<https://www.wichita.edu/talentsearch>

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Notice of Funding:
TRIO Talent Search is 100% funded by the United States Department of Education and is hosted by WSU. Funding for 2023-2024 is \$672,135.



February 2024

- 2/14 | Valentine's Day
- 2/16 | District Inservice Day
(NO SCHOOL)
- 2/19 | President's Day
(NO SCHOOL)

January 2024

- 1/03 | USD 259 Reopens
- 1/16 | Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
(NO SCHOOL)

December 2023

- 12/01 | Garden City Community College Campus Visit
- 12/18-1/02 | USD 259 Winter Recess (NO SCHOOL)
- 12/25 | Christmas Day
- 12/31 | New Year's Eve



Program Staff

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