

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN SYSTEM
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LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES

LEGISLATION: Changes to TRIO Regulations

AGENCY: Department of Education

DESCRIPTION: TRIO Programs are educational opportunity outreach programs designed to motivate and support students from disadvantaged backgrounds. TRIO includes six outreach and support programs targeted to serve and assist low-income, first-generation college students, and students with disabilities to progress through college and beyond.

The Student Support Services (SSS) program within TRIO provides opportunities for academic development, assists students with basic college requirements, and serves to motivate students towards graduating from college. The SSS program also gives grants to current SSS participants who are receiving Pell Grants.

To receive assistance, students must be enrolled or accepted for enrollment in a program of postsecondary education at a grantee institution. Only low-income individuals who are first-generation college students and students with disabilities and a need for academic support are eligible to participate in SSS projects.

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SPECIFIC
REQUEST: Amend Section 402A of the Higher Education Act of 1965 to define the terms “Different Campus” and “Different Population.”

IMPACT ON
WISCONSIN: While independent in practically every respect, the thirteen, freshman-sophomore colleges of the University of Wisconsin System are headed by a single chancellor and administered by a centralized financial aid operation. As a result, for purposes of the Student Support Services program (but not for other TRIO programs), the Department of Education has ruled that the UW Colleges do not meet the standards set under 34 CFR 646.7 for having “independent” campuses. Because of this interpretation, the entire two-year UW college system is eligible for no more than one grant. UW Colleges has a total of 2,411 students that are Pell Grant eligible. Of these students, 912, or 38%, are eligible to be served by the SSS program at four campuses (UW-Waukesha, UW-Rock, UW-Baraboo/Sauk County, and UW-Marathon). UW Colleges has nine additional campuses, with 1,499 low-income students, or 62%, that cannot participate in the SSS program as a result of this ruling.