

Decision Partners, Inc.

Independent Financial Literacy Education

The Higher Education Opportunity Act and Financial Literacy: TRIO Programs

Understanding the practical implications of complex legislation can be a challenge. This document seeks to clarify the changes made to the TRIO Student Support Services (SSS), Upward Bound, and Talent Search programs by the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA).

Student Support Service Program *(20 USC 1070 - Sec. 1070a-14)*

The HEOA marks a significant expansion of the SSS mission. Financial literacy education is now part of the core SSS mission and is required of all SSS programs.

Prior to the HEOA, the SSS mission read:

(a) Program Authority

The Secretary shall carry out a program to be known as student support services which shall be designed -

- (1) to increase college retention and graduation rates for eligible students;
- (2) to increase the transfer rates of eligible students from 2-year to 4-year institutions; and
- (3) to foster an institutional climate supportive of the success of low-income and first generation college students and individuals with disabilities.

After passage of the HEOA, the SSS mission reads:

(a) Program Authority

The Secretary shall carry out a program to be known as student support services which shall be designed -

- (1) to increase college retention and graduation rates for eligible students;
- (2) to increase the transfer rates of eligible students from 2-year to 4-year institutions;
- (3) to foster an institutional climate supportive of the success of students who are limited English proficient, students from groups that are traditionally underrepresented in postsecondary education, students with disabilities, students who are homeless children and youths (as such term is defined in section 725 of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11434a), students who are in foster care or are aging out of the foster care system, or other disconnected students; and
- (4) to improve the financial literacy and economic literacy of students, including
 - (a) basic personal income, household money management, and financial planning skills; and
 - (b) basic economic decision making skills.

By expanding the mission of SSS to encompass financial literacy education, the HEOA helps students prepare for the transition to financial independence. Most importantly, the Act is attempting to address the problem of student indebtedness as a requirement for the neediest of students.

Financial Literacy as a Required Service

In addition to academic tutoring services, assistance completing financial applications (such as FAFSA), encouraging completion of a four-year degree, and other services, SSS programs must now provide:

“Education or counseling services designed to improve the financial literacy and economic literacy of students, including financial planning for postsecondary education.”

Upward Bound (20 U.S.C. 1070 - Section 402C) **and Talent Search** (20 U.S.C. 1070 - Section 402B)

While the inclusion of financial literacy in Upward Bound and Talent Search is not as sweeping as SSS, financial literacy education is now a required service of these programs as well.

Upward Bound programs must now provide:

“Education or counseling services designed to improve the financial literacy and economic literacy of students or the students’ parents, including financial planning for postsecondary education.”

Talent Search programs must now provide:

“Connections to education or counseling services designed to improve the financial literacy and economic literacy of students or the students’ parents, including financial planning for postsecondary education.”

Financial Literacy 101 for TRIO

Decision Partners welcomes the HEOA focus on financial literacy education for TRIO and has developed Financial Literacy 101 for TRIO, a new program designed for the specific needs of SSS programs (Upward Bound and Talent Search coming soon). The program includes:

- Student access to Financial Literacy 101, the leading course for student financial literacy education.
- An administrative control panel for viewing student progress and exporting usage data for audits and reporting.
- Presentations for introducing financial topics and discussion in group settings.
- An administrator guide for understanding key course concepts.
- Unlimited access codes per school for making the course available to different student groups (includes a separate administrative control panel for each group).
- A yearly aggregate data report which includes both usage and survey data from all participants.

For more information on Financial Literacy 101 for TRIO, or to receive the entire text of the new HEOA requirements for these programs, please visit www.decisionpartners.org/TRIO or contact Jim Pfeiffer at 978-562-1390 or by email at jim@decisionpartners.org.