Empowering Dreams & Transforming Lives!

49th Annual MEAEOPP Conference

February 15 - 18, 2026

Maryland Live!
Hanover, Maryland

#TRIOWorks

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Visit linktr.ee/meaeopp or scan the QR Code below to find information on Keynote Speakers, Breakout Session Descriptions, and Presenters, and other pertinent conference information.

Share your conference photos by emailing them to meaeoppregion@gmail.com.

www.meaeopp.org

meaeopp

Conference Co-Chair Welcome Letter

Dear TRIO Colleagues,

Welcome to the 49th Annual Mid-Eastern Association of Educational Opportunity Program Personnel (MEAEOPP) Conference!

It is with immense gratitude and shared purpose that we welcome each of you—our dedicated colleagues, champions, and change-makers. As you settle in for this year's conference, know that you are stepping into a space built by you and for you: a community of practice, unwavering support, and a powerful collective voice.

This year's theme, "Empowering Dreams, Transforming Lives," is not merely a slogan. It is the very essence of our daily work. It is the quiet encouragement that turns doubt into determination. It is the relentless advocacy that opens doors deemed closed. It is the unwavering belief in a participant's potential that ignites a journey far beyond what they imagined. Here, over these next few days, we recommit to this sacred charge. We will share the strategies, data, and innovations that sharpen our ability to empower, and we will celebrate the countless transformations we witness and shepherd.

We gather this year with a profound awareness of the landscape we have navigated. The past year has presented Federal TRIO programs with significant challenges—shifting policies, funding uncertainties, and the ever-increasing complexities faced by the remarkable individuals we serve. We have seen firsthand the weight of these struggles. Yet, we gather not in a spirit of fatigue, but in a spirit of *resiliency*. You have adapted, advocated, and persisted. You have stretched resources, comforted anxieties, and continued to show up, ensuring that every dream in your care remained nurtured and every potential life transformation stayed on course.

Therefore, let this gathering be our collective recharge. Let it be a time to fortify our networks, to draw strength from shared stories, and to refine our tools for the journey ahead. Engage deeply in our workshops and dialogues. Reconnect with old friends and welcome new ones. Share your struggles and your solutions.

Together, we are the architects of opportunity, the custodians of dreams, and the catalysts for transformation. Thank you for your vital work, for your resilience, and for being here.

Now, let's begin. Let's empower. Let's transform.

With respect and partnership,

Danny Giles
MEAEOPP Immediate-Past President
Conference Co-Chair
Virginia State University
TRIO SSS Director

Scott Robertson
MEAEOPP President-Elect
Conference Co-Chair
West Virginia University Institute of Technology
Assistant Dean of Students
TRIO SSS and TRIO UB Director

MEAEOPP President Welcome Letter

Greetings MEAEOPP family, distinguished guests, and friends,

Welcome to the 49th Annual MEAEOPP Conference here at Maryland Live! and welcome home to a space filled with purpose, passion, and people who believe deeply in the power of opportunity.

This year's theme, Empowering Dreams and Transforming Lives, is more than a conference title—it reflects on the work we live every day. Across our region, from the hills of West Virginia to the vibrant campuses and communities throughout Maryland, TRIO professionals are meeting students where they are and walking beside them as they discover what is possible. I am honored to stand before a community that does not just talk about impact—we create it.

MEAEOPP has always been special to me because it is built on relationships. It is the conversations in hallways, the check-ins that turn into mentorships, and the moments when we choose to take just a little extra time to connect. Those moments matter. They are often the reason a student stays; a colleague feels supported, or a new professional finds their confidence. Never underestimate your personal impact, sometimes the smallest act of connection becomes the most powerful turning point in someone's story.

As someone who calls West Virginia home, I am especially proud of how our region shows up for one another. There is something deeply familiar with that Appalachian spirit of looking out for your neighbor, and I see that same spirit alive in this room. And here in Maryland, a place where so many paths intersect, we are reminded that our collective strength comes from bringing diverse voices together with shared purpose.

As we move through this conference, I invite you to be fully present. Introduce yourself to someone new. Share your story. Listen with intention. Take the extra step, it makes a difference to that person, even if you never fully see the ripple effect of your kindness and care.

My hope is that you leave this conference re-energized, reminded of why you chose this work, and confident in the role you play in empowering dreams and transforming lives: one student, one connection, one moment at a time.

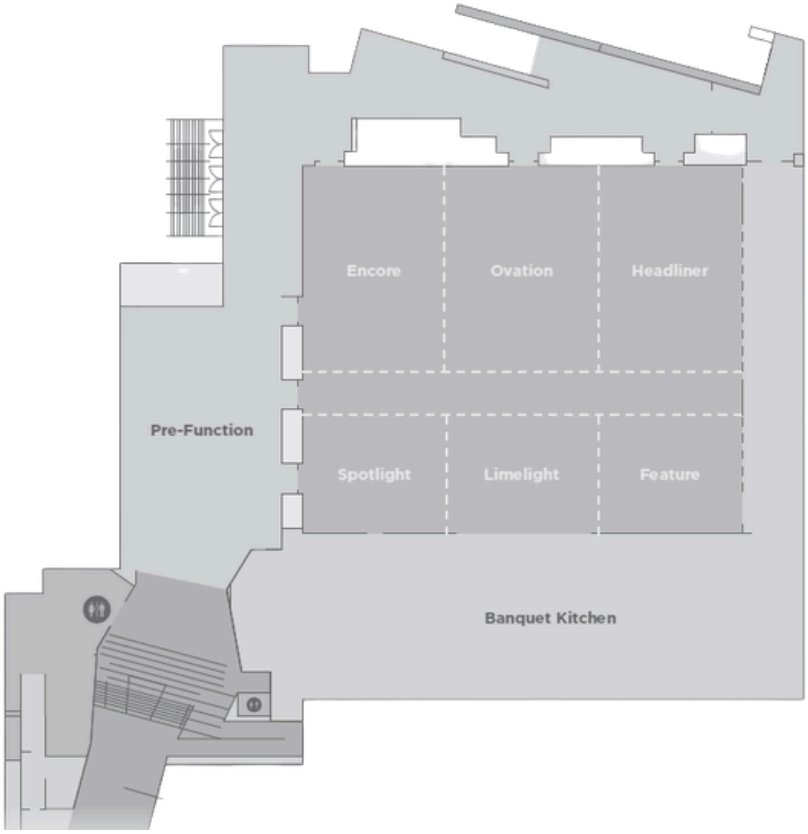
Thank you for being here. Thank you for believing in our students, in each other, and in the mission that brings us together.

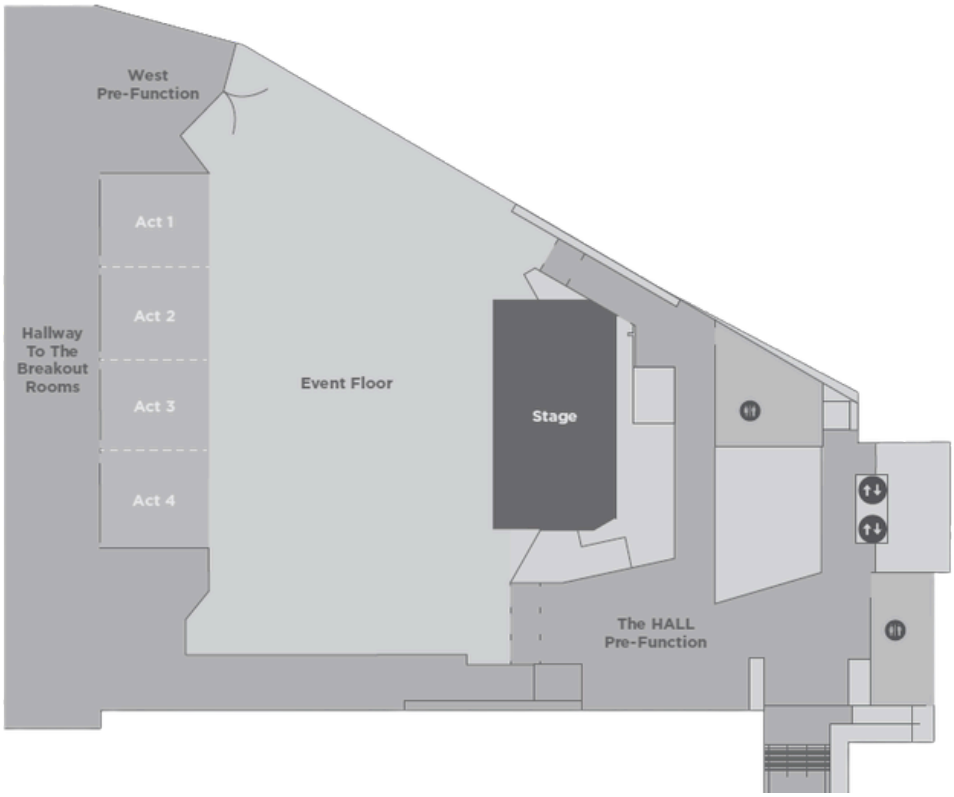
Here's to continuing this journey together.

With gratitude and heart,

Chelsey A. Toms
President, MEAEOPP
West Virginia Institute of Technology
College Success Coach
TRIO SSS

Conference Center Maps





Conference Schedule

Sunday, February 15, 2026		
Time	**Event**	**Location**
1:00 PM - 5:00 PM	Conference Registration	Box Office
6:00 PM	Opening Night Plenary featuring Cole Blalock	Encore Room
7:30 PM	Opening Night Reception Guests of Honor: TRIO Alumni	West Pre-Function

Monday, February 16, 2026		
Time	**Event**	**Location**
7:30 AM - 8:30 AM	Newcomer's Breakfast	Invitation Only
8:30 AM - 2:00 PM	Conference Registration	Box Office
8:30 AM - 2:00 PM	Development and Silent Auction	Conference Lobby
8:30 AM - 5:00 PM	Vendors Open	Conference Lobby
9:00 AM - 9:50 AM	Morning Plenary featuring Kimberly Jones, COE President and Jeff Khalden, COE 25-26 Board Chair	Encore
10:00 AM - 10:50 AM	Conference Breakout Sessions	See Linktree for detailed descriptions
11:00 AM - 11:50 AM	Conference Breakout Sessions	See Linktree for detailed descriptions
Noon - 1:45 PM	Award Luncheon	Ovation/Headliner
2:00 PM - 4:15 PM	MEAEOPP Business Meeting and Canidates' Forum	Ovation/Headliner
5:00 PM	Dinner on Your Own	Explore Hanover, MD

Conference Schedule

Tuesday, February 17, 2026		
Time	**Event**	**Location**
8:00 AM - 4:00 PM	Conference Registration	Box Office
8:00 AM - 2:00 PM	Development and Silent Auction	Conference Lobby
8:00 AM - 4:00 PM	Vendors Open	Conference Lobby
9:00 AM - 9:50 AM	Conference Breakout Sessions	See Linktree for detailed descriptions
10:00 AM - 11:30 AM	State Meetings	MD - Spotlight PA - Limelight VA - Feature WV - Act 1 &2
11:30 AM - 1:45 PM	Lunch on Your Own	
2:00 PM - 2:50 PM	Conference Breakout Sessions	See Linktree for detailed descriptions
3:00 PM - 3:50 PM	Conference Breakout Sessions	See Linktree for detailed descriptions
5:30 PM	Reception	Pre-Function
6:30 PM	President's Banquet	Ovation/Headliner

Wednesday, February 18, 2026		
Time	**Event**	**Location**
8:00 AM	Breakfast Buffett	Ovation/Headliner
9:00 AM - 10:30 AM	Closing Plenary featuring Angela Holley, COE Director of Student Opportunities Installation of Officers, Evaluations, and Prize Drawings	Ovation/Headliner

Breakout Session Overview

Monday, February 16, 2026	
Time: 10:00 AM - 10:50 AM	
Show Me The Money! Create Financial Literacy Experiences Your Students Will Never Forget	Spotlight
Modern SharePoint Workflows for TRIO: Behind the Scenes of Student Success	Limelight
Prepared For What? Defining College Readiness Standards in Upward Bound	Feature
Elevate Your Program's Impact: Maximize Student Engagement, Achieve Proven Results!	Act 1-2
When the Work Changes Us: Resilience and Renewal in TRIO Spaces	Act 3-4
Engaging Students in COE's Student Opportunities Programming: Strategies for Meaningful Participation	Encore
Time: 11:00 AM - 11:50 AM	
The Magic of Connection	Spotlight
The Hidden Barriers to Learning: ACEs and Student Achievement	Limelight
Why TRIO Burnout Hits Different: Supporting Students Shaped by Adversity, Instability, and Survival	Feature
More Than the Background: How Support Staff Power TRIO Student Outcomes	Act 1-2
Mastering TRIO Data Like a Pro with StudentAccess	Act 3-4
Know Your Authority	Encore
Tuesday, February 17, 2026	
Time: 9:00 AM - 9:50 AM	
Meeting Students Where They Are: AI-Powered Tools That Transform TRIO Support & Engagement	Spotlight
Leading from Within: Discovering Your Authentic Leadership Identity	Limelight
Pathway to Professional Growth: Enhancing Micro-Skills for TRIO Administrators	Feature
Dialogue as Practice: Empowering Dreams and Transforming Lives Through Holistic Critical Mentoring in TRIO	Act 1-2

Breakout Session Overview

Tuesday, February 17, 2026	
Time: 9:00 AM - 9:50 AM	
Bridging Two Worlds: Applying Social Work Practice in TRIO Programs	Act 3-4
Succession Planning: Preparing the Next Generation of TRIO Leaders!	Encore
Time: 2:00 PM - 2:50 PM	
60 Miles to the Next Service	Spotlight
Safety and Protection of Minors on Campus and Community Agencies	Limelight
Designing High-Engagement Activities for TRIO Students	Feature
Creating a 3D Interactive World	Act 1-2
Making the Invisible Visible: Using Student Mapping to Empower Dreams and Transform Lives	Act 3-4
Genius Engagement: Genius Engagement: How Hip Hop & Edutainment Boost Recruitment, Attendance, And Engagement For Grant Outcomes	Encore
Time: 3:00 PM - 3:50 PM	
Sessions	*Room*
Leading Multiple TRIO Grants in a Matrix Environment	Spotlight
BLUMEN SOFTWARE – Find out why it's miles ahead of other	Limelight
Empowering Learners with EdReady: Personalized Pathways to College and Career Success	Feature
Centering Student Voices: A Strategy for Stronger TRIO Engagement on Social Media	Act 1-2
Leadership 101: Expectations of Leadership	Act 3-4
Financial Foundations: Parents and Students Learning Together	Encore

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TUESDAY 2PM!
GENIUS ENGAGEMENT:
HOW HIP HOP & EDUTAINMENT BOOST RECRUITMENT, ATTENDANCE, AND ENGAGEMENT FOR GRANT OUTCOMES!!

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Test your luck at a game of “Plinko” or “Spin That Wheel” to win gift cards, TRIO gear, or a sweet treat. Oh, and don’t forget to check out our Silent Auction and 50/50 Raffle.

All funds raised support the MEAEOPP Scholarship Fund.

A heartfelt congratulations to Danny Giles for leading the charge in student success. By connecting Upward Bound, ETS, TRIO SSS, EOC, and CCAMPIS, you make access to the change the world needs. At VSU, Greater Happens Here because of your vision for greater opportunities and even greater futures!

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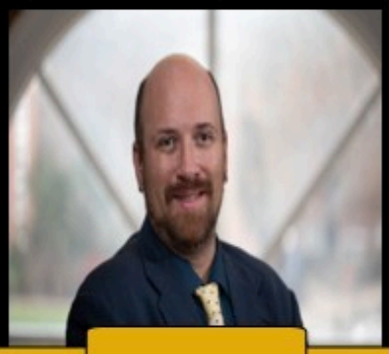
MEAEOPP 49th Annual Conference

Conference Planning Committee Appreciation

From Chelsey Toms, President

Danny Giles

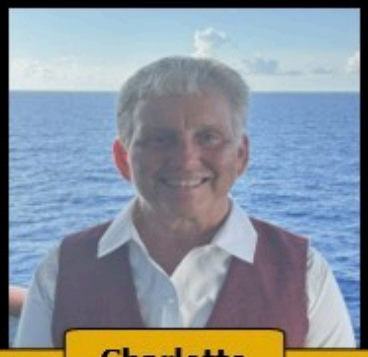
Scott Robertson



AJ Best

Erik Austin

Christie Hardbarger



Charlotte Mowery

Tira Runyon

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Thank you for serving our region with excellence and heart.

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TRIO Professionals In MEAEOPP, Your Voice Matters In Washington, D.C.!

One mission. One voice. One TRIO. Secure your spot for the 2026 COE Policy Seminar, happening from **Sunday, March 8, through Wednesday, March 11,** in the heart of **Washington, D.C.** This pivotal event is your opportunity to advocate for the future of TRIO programs, share powerful student success stories, and engage with lawmakers to ensure continued support for first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented students nationwide. Learn more at **coenet.org.**

A Special Reception for Alumni in D.C.

Join fellow TRIO alumni in Washington, D.C., for a special Alumni Reception on **Tuesday, March 10, at 7:00 p.m.,** hosted at **1025 Vermont Avenue NW, Suite 400**. This gathering is an opportunity to reconnect, reflect, and build new relationships with alumni who share your journey as first-generation and low-income college graduates.

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Scott Robertson, MEAEOPP President-Elect, WVU-Tech Dean of Students, Director of SSS and UB, WV TRIO Governmental Relations Chair and TRIO Alumni

The TRIO Code: A Conference Quest

Decode the 4 pieces to help PA TRIO send a message.

Motivating access to education

Empwering first-generation students

Advocating for equity

Elevating opportunity

Organizing educators & advocates

Partnering for student success

Proven leadership in action

Pennsylvania Association of TRiO Programs

Take the first letter of each line to uncover the first word.

_ _ _ _ _ _ _

Mark Your Calendars!

Council for Opportunity in Education Annual Conference

Hilton San Diego Bayfront
September 23 - 26, 2026

Keep a close eye on your email for updates on conference registration, lodging, and the call for proposals.

https://www.vaeopp.org/conference

More Information to come

The TRIO Code: A Conference Quest

Piece 2: Number Cipher

Alphabet Key:

A=1, B=2, C=3,... Z=26

Code:

20 – 8 – 1 – 14 – 11

25 – 15 – 21

Your answer:

_ _ _ _ _

_ _ _

Pennsylvania Association of TRiO Programs

Notes

The TRIO Code: A Conference Quest

Piece 3: TRIO Logic Clue

Clue:

An adjective describing a conference that achieved its goals, strengthened partnerships, and advanced student opportunity.

Pennsylvania Association of TRiO Programs

Your answer:

_____

Notes

Notes

The TRIO Code: A Conference Quest

Piece 4: The Message

_____ , _____
[piece one] [piece two]

and congratulations on a

_____ conference.
[piece three]

Pennsylvania Association of TRiO Programs

Thank you for participating.