

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 24, 2025

The Honorable Linda McMahon
Secretary of Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary McMahon:

We write to express grave concern regarding the Department of Education's ("Department") decision to terminate Federal TRIO Upward Bound grants awarded to Pima Community College (PCC). On May 29 2025, the Department notified PCC that its grants for the Northwest and Downtown Campuses would be rescinded due to alleged misalignment with the current Administration's policy priorities. These unexpected termination notices arrived just one week before PCC was scheduled to receive its June 1 disbursement of funds.

There had been no prior indication of performance issues, and the Department's letters provided little explanation of how PCC's use of TRIO funds conflicts with the goals of the Administration. In response, PCC filed an appeal on June 23 2025, well within the 30-day window provided. We respectfully urge the Department to grant this appeal and reinstate PCC's Upward Bound grants. Further delays risk serious and potentially irreversible disruptions to program operations and staffing. Resolving this matter promptly will ensure stability for the students and communities these programs serve.

Upward Bound is one of eight federal TRIO programs, and plays a vital role in supporting first-generation and low-income high school students in college readiness and completion.¹ Since launching its Upward Bound programs at its Northwest and Downtown Campuses in 1989, Pima Community College has helped thousands of students across Arizona access higher education. PCC's Upward Bound participants have received critical support in areas such as financial literacy and the college admissions process. These resources have equipped students with the confidence and knowledge needed to pursue post-secondary educational opportunities. Research has consistently shown that Upward Bound participants are more likely to enter and complete college than their peers from similar economic backgrounds. At PCC, students have also developed strong academic skills in math, writing, and science, which have directly contributed to their post-secondary success. Compared to students in the lowest income quartile, Upward Bound participants are more than twice as likely to earn a bachelor's degree by age 24.²

¹ <https://www.ed.gov/about/ed-offices/ope/trio#trio-programs>; <https://www.ed.gov/grants-and-programs/grants-higher-education/trio/upward-bound-program>.

² <https://coenet.org/news-impact/press-release/council-for-opportunity-in-education-condemns-president-trumps-proposal-to-eliminate-federal-trio-programs/>.

While we are primarily concerned by the premature termination of PCC's Upward Bound grants, we are worried that this decision will make broader efforts to undermine TRIO programs across our state and nation. Currently, over 3,500 TRIO programs serve underprivileged students throughout the country.³ Roughly 50 of these programs benefit Arizonans, though this number is likely to grow in the coming months.⁴ Additional rounds of TRIO grants are expected to take effect at PCC and other Arizona colleges, with some set to begin as soon as September 1st, 2025.

The cancellation of TRIO Upward Bound grants at Pima Community College will deprive first-generation and low-income Arizonan youth of transformative opportunities for academic and professional growth. It will put a post-secondary education further out of reach, and it will adversely impact workforce readiness in Arizona. As PCC has now submitted an appeal for its terminated Upward Bound grants, we strongly urge you to give it your full and fair consideration. Moreover, we ask that you preserve federal support for TRIO programs at large, including by ensuring the timely disbursement of other TRIO grant funding awarded to PCC and its peer institutions elsewhere in Arizona.

Thank you for your attention to this pressing matter.

Sincerely,



Ruben Gallego
United States Senator



Mark Kelly
United States Senator



Greg Stanton
United States Congressman



Yassamin Ansari
United States Congresswoman

³ <https://coenet.org/coe-and-trio-programs/#:~:text=More%20than%203%2C500%20TRIO%20programs%20currently%20serve,students%20ranging%20from%20sixth%2Dgrade%20through%20adult%20education.&text=Together%2C%20the%20three%20programs%20became%20known%20as,Bound%2C%20Educational%20Opportunity%20Centers%2C%20the%20Ronald%20E.>

⁴ [https://ope.ed.gov/programs/mapED/storymaps/trio/?page=TRIO-Footprint-2022-23-Draft-2&views=TS.](https://ope.ed.gov/programs/mapED/storymaps/trio/?page=TRIO-Footprint-2022-23-Draft-2&views=TS)