

University of Northern Iowa
Statements From Individuals Who Have Experience
TRIO Programs

Reygan Freaney

According to Charles Darwin, “If the misery of the poor be caused not by the laws of nature, but by our institutions, great is our sin.” This is why the Federal TRIO programs are of such importance. I was a low-income, African-American girl from a single parent household residing on the eastside of Waterloo, Iowa and labeled as a, “low-income, disadvantaged youth.” This was my identifier before becoming a participant in the Classic Upward Bound Program (CUB). The Upward Bound program has had substantial influence on my life in immeasurable ways. The program leveled the educational and socioeconomic playing field for a poor girl whose mother only graduated from high school.

The Classic Upward Bound Program challenged me to become a scholar. Initially, the program made a connection with me that eventually lead to a difference within me. It planted and nurtured the seed of a quality education and the Student Support Services (SSS) program fostered its growth while I attended college. I was the first person in my entire family to attend and graduate college. The SSS program staff served as academic advisors, confidants, and (at times) a surrogate mother because my family did not understand many of the issues I faced as a college student.

TRIO programs encouraged to me to become a productive citizen who is a valuable contributor to society. I think about these programs and the impact on my life and how my mother and I sat in an office filing out the FAFSA Federal Student Aid form and she had never planted a foot in a university office before this meeting. I have finished all the requirements for my Ph.D. in chemistry and will be defending my dissertation related to nanoscience shortly. I believe I was worth the investment of the TRIO programs; it provided me with awareness and empowerment that a lonely child going up on the wrong side of the track did not have access to. Statistically speaking, I should not be where I am today but I currently teach chemistry at the University of Northern Iowa. TRIO has equipped me with the tools of being a change agent and it an investment in America’s future.

To Whom It May Concern:

What does Upward Bound mean to me? I Joined Upward Bound as a sophomore in high school because my best friend was in the program. I entered the program with no job, no money, and the usual “I know it all” attitude of a sixteen-year-old, but I left with so much more.

I think all teenagers feel like something is missing in their lives. We're trapped in a mental purgatory between childhood and adulthood, seeking something for ourselves, searching for our potential and the kind of adults we wish to become.

We enter into high school hoping we'll find what we are looking for. We join sports, music, drama, and unfortunately sometimes we turn to drugs or gangs. But we're all looking for our niche, somewhere that we will belong.

I think that some of the problem is that although we have a school full of people trying to prepare us for our adulthood and our future, they simply can't do everything for all of their students which we might need. Trio Programs were able to provide mentors for me, people who were in places that seem intangible to most students who aren't in the program. We got a glimpse of what our futures could hold for us and we were shown that there were people who went through the same things that we did, and made it. Upward Bound showed us that we all had this potential, the abilities to succeed as well. This is something that only they could have provided us, and something that was invaluable to my success and undoubtedly the others around us.

Upward Bound provides us a place where friendships can be fostered with peers who also value their education and the opportunities that it will provide. Not only that, but they provide it for those who need it the most – those who often aren't able to have their parents around them enough to mentor them because they might be working two jobs to support their family. Tutorials give us a safe and stress-free environment that we can escape to for a couple of hours to study, and the tutors are people that are often going to college who can be related to and looked up to as a role model and someone that we can gain advice from. Best of all, it was free.

Growing up, I always thought I knew everything because I was intelligent, but my senior year of high school hit me hard. For once in my life, I didn't know what I was doing or where I wanted to go in life. Upward Bound helped me figure out that a four-year university was the best place for me to go, but that presented a new problem. My parents aren't able to work much since they're both disabled, and I couldn't find a job at all. How would we be able to pay for even one year of college, let alone four and which one would I pick?

Upward Bound helped me figure that out too. They helped me find and apply to scholarships, took me on college tours, and helped me fill out my FAFSA, which I hadn't even heard of up until that point. They paid for my application fees, which I certainly wouldn't have been able to do, and I now had valuable references that could write me letters of recommendation from the program. They motivated me, supported me, and wouldn't accept anything short of excellence.

Upward Bound wasn't just a program that helped me graduate from high school and move on to college. It was a program that actually cared about me and asked for nothing in return, which is something that you don't encounter very often anymore. Upward bound showed me that doing the bare minimum wasn't acceptable—I had to exceed even my own standards. So when I was asked to write this, there really wasn't even a choice for me to make. How could I not, when Upward Bound taught me how to excel in my education, and to accept no one's limitations for my achievement?

Upward Bound was my teacher, my mentor, my counselor, my friend, and my parent all rolled up in one, and Upward Bound showed me how to not only be a student, but a resilient woman who will *never* let anyone tell her she can't do or be something ever again. *That* is what Upward Bound means to me.

Thank you,
Krystal M. Robinson, freshman at the University of Northern Iowa

Hello my name is Azline Nelson.

I started the TRIO programs when I was a 6th grader and have been an active participant since that time. I have been an active member in talent search, the Classic Upward Bound program and this past summer I served as a Tutor-Mentor for the classic upward program.

During high school I was active in the academic year by participating in tutorials and during the summer I was a scholar in the summer enrichment Classic Upward Bound program. Without both programs to prepare me for life, I do not how I would have been successful in any of my endeavors. These programs taught me the importance of time management, effective communication, how to seek resources, networking and how to follow up once you have interacted with someone and most importantly pointed me in the right direction to receive my fantastic scholarship.

I am in recognition of the Gates Millennium Scholarship and I would not be able to say that without the aid of TRIO programs. They have groomed me for success better than any program that I have ever been a part of. They have encouraged me to stay active with community service, active on campus and helped to enroll me in leadership training to develop my interpersonal skills. This program has helped tremendously to make me the excellent scholar that I am today.

I am a sophomore at Spelman College on the Dean's List with a GPA of 3.7. I currently serve as the Educational Advancement Foundation Chair for Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Incorporated and I am the treasury of Toastmaster International. Without TRIO programs I would not be able to claim recognition to any of the accomplishments listed above.

The faculties hired for TRIO programs truly care about the best interests of the students are they are there to encourage and provide scholars with the necessary skills to become successful in life. They possibilities are endless with the aid of TRIO programs and they deserve to be the premier programs that students have access to. They provide all the necessary resources to take scholars anywhere they aspire. Please keep funding for all TRIO programs to help ensure the success of more students and produce more individuals similar to me.

UNI Classic Upward Bound

UNI Classic Upward Bound is an essential entity to the community it serves, not only does this program develop collaborative relationships among members of the community it services, but it also provides great opportunities for many. CUB is designed to improve the life of the target population (low income & first generation students) by allowing them to maintain valuable life skills in the areas of, but not limited to networking, academics, and community service opportunities. This program is essential to the advancement of the many students it serves; CUB is one of the few positive outlets for children, especially low income and first generation students, in Black Hawk County. CUB is committed to building long lasting relationship with the students; this does not only serve a valuable purpose in their immediate lives, but also in their future endeavors.

Neither of my parents went to college, my father did not have the opportunity of graduating high school. Yet they instilled in me the importance of going to college and getting a good education so that I would not have to work hard and live paycheck to paycheck as they did. Although they wanted the best for me they did not know how to ensure that I obtained the necessary tools to be successful, I did not either, lucky for me there was a group of committed people who reached out to me and gave me what my parents could not provide. I was first enrolled in the CUB program after the completion of my eighth grade year in the summer of 1999, as a student transitioning into high school. I stayed in contact with the wonderful Director Wilfred M. Johnson over the years, even while obtaining my BA from the University of Iowa. As of December 2010, I returned to the Waterloo area where I currently work as a tutor/mentor for the program. I am taking this moment to give to others what was given to me in hopes of inspiring them and giving them the motivation that I had to be the successful young woman that I am today.

The program continues to teach me beneficial concepts, while I was in the program I learned things such as how to enhance my academic skills and peer relationships, now as a post-program participator and tutor/mentor I am learning how to be a positive influence to the younger generation. I am also learning how to break the ice with what we call "little people" and also how to make learning interesting so they actually absorb the information that is given to them. With these students (low income or first generation) their parents are usually working and do not have the time and/or knowledge to ensure that their homework is not only getting done and turned in, but that they understand the concepts of their academic work. CUB provides great academic support and is a positive force within the community.

Sincerely,
Keyah Levy

January 31, 2011

To whom it may concern:

I am writing this letter to express concern for the Classic Upward Bound (CUB) Program at the University of Northern Iowa. I was exposed in the CUB program for the first time, in the summer of 1995. A friend of mine mentioned it to me, as she knew some people in the program,

and we did not know the program specifics, but we did know that it was a program we wanted to be in! We would get to spend the summers on UNI's campus away from our parents, and we would get a weekly stipend. We did not know anything else that we would have to do, but we were sold!

It was during the 1995/96 academic school year that I applied for and was accepted to the program, and regardless of my motivation for enrolling, the program has had a profound impact on my life. From the first time that I met the program director, Mickye Johnson, I knew that he would change me, and help mold me into a more productive member of society. My first summer in the program was the first time I had ever been away from home for so long, but it was such a wonderful opportunity for growth for me. Not only was I challenged academically, but I was also challenged to grow personally, and molded into a person who aspired to not only understand what was going on around me, but to impact that. I started my high school "career" a step ahead because now I knew some people that would attend Waterloo East High School with me that I had not previously known, and I had an academic advantage as I had already been exposed to some of the course material during the summer instructional program. That was one of my first experiences with the CUB program, but it had such a long lasting impact on my life. I still look to the staff of the program for inspiration and mentorship in my professional life. I am currently employed by Hawkeye Community College as an Academic/Career Advising Coordinator. A position that I know was motivated by my early exposure to college through the Classic Upward Bound Program. At that time, I was sure I was going to go to medical school and become a doctor. At some point, my desire to help others in a medical capacity changed, and I knew my passion for education and helping others reach their educational goals would be my life passion.

I am a true testament of what the Classic Upward Bound program can do to help a student reach their educational potential. I come from a single-parent, low-income, first generation home. My mother raised four children by herself while working a full-time job, and we were involved with the CUB program, and have had some experience with college. I hold a Bachelor's degree in Psychology, and a Master's degree in Social Work, and am in the process of pursuing a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership, my younger siblings are all currently enrolled in educational programs. My younger brother is pursuing an AAS in Automotive Technology, my youngest brother a BA in Business from the University of Northern Iowa, and my sister is currently enrolled in medical school at the University of North Carolina. My mother instilled in us all a respect for education, and expected that we would all attend college, but the Classic Upward Bound program showed us that going to college could be a reality, and helped us to make those dreams a reality. It was that we would need financial support in order to attend college. They helped us to search and apply for scholarships, and to fill out the FAFSA which my mother still, after all these years, still likes a little assistance to fill out.

Through the Classic Upward Bound program, I was also exposed to educational opportunities offered by other TRIO programs. I was a participant in the Educational Talent Search program, and exposed some of my friends who could not get into the CUB program to opportunities available through this program. I was also a summer participant in the Math/Science Upward Bound program, which was yet another growth opportunity given to me by the program as I left the Waterloo/Cedar Falls area, and my comfort zone. Once I graduated from college, during my bridge year, I was connected to the Student Support Services program, and the Educational Opportunity Center, which helped ease my transition from high school to

college. These programs were able to provide me support and opportunities for growth during my college years, but the support that I received from the programs did not stop once I obtained my BA. I also was allowed to do a practicum for my Master's program with the CUB program, which exposed me to a lot of the background information that as a participant you may not understand, and also, I believe, helped me to get my first full-time job. The first career opportunity that I was offered upon graduation was with the Student Support Services at Hawkeye Community College. I know that my first-hand experience with the program, as well as the grooming that I received during my practicum contributed to this opportunity. The Classic Upward Bound program at the University of Northern Iowa has had a PROFOUND impact on my life. I fully support this program, and pray that students are offered the opportunities and experiences that I was exposed to for years to come. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at (319)296-4014, or via email at leah.clark@hawkeyecollege.edu. Thank you for taking the time to read this letter, and thanking you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Leah Clark, LMSW

My name is Robert Abben. I have been a part of the Classic Upward Bound Program for a total of ten years now. When I heard that funding for the program was going to be cut, I felt the need as a future educator to do my part to ensure that the program remains in place. This is necessary because countless individuals deserve the same opportunity that the program provided me four short years ago.

The Program has been so beneficial to me that it troubles me to know where to begin to tell the story of how the program has influenced me. The truth is I feel now that the program played a great role in making me the person that I am today. I entered the program the spring semester of my freshman year of high school in 2001 as a first generation college student. I came in just like every other student. I was young, immature, smart-mouthed, and thought I owned the world. Soon after I entered the program, Mr. Johnson cracked his whip. Some may be wondering exactly what whip I am referring to and that whip is the one that turns over 80% of those smart-mouthed, know-it-all students into young, college educated adults. Over the years, as we have grown up, some of us have gone into business, counseling, other of us like my self, have gone on to become educators. We will be taking what Upward Bound has instilled in us and pass it on for generations to come in our classrooms throughout the United States. Other participants have even gone on to work in the White House.

Without this program, many of us would have never thought twice about a college education. The truth of it is, ask any educator and they will tell you, parental involvement is lacking in today's society. Many parents or guardians are not actively involved in their child's education. This may not be their intent but they may not have a choice. They may have to work two jobs so that their child can eat. Unfortunately, food tends to come before education. The Upward Bound Program is exactly what students in these types of situations need. Mr Johnson, in some respects, help raised me and with the help of my parents and all of the rest of the Upward Bound Staff, I am where I am today. We can not take this away from future generations. If students with so much potential are allowed to slip through the cracks in the education system and do not have the support of the program, we as educators would be doing our students and

society a disservice. The next doctor or Johnny Cockerin could be passed by because they did not believe they were smart enough or financially able to attend college. Upward Bound may be the only thing telling them otherwise.

Sure, if some students are asked what they think of the program, they may say it is terrible. There are so many rules, we can not have any fun. Also, it is so hot in those dorms. Who wants to go to school in the summertime? I will be the first to say I thought the same thing when I was younger. However, this really is one of those times when individuals do not realize what a great resource they have in front of them until it is gone. So please take my advice as a former student and future educator and please do not take the only chance at an education that some of our future students may have away from them.

To whom this may concern,

I am writing this letter on behalf of the esteemed "Upward Bound" program. Created in 1968, Upward Bound is a vessel used to fight the "war on poverty." Since inception this program has helped thousands of students from disadvantaged backgrounds, including myself. Having a father who dropped out of school in tenth grade and a mother who obtained only a high school diploma, college was not the topic of discussion within my household. My parents were more concerned or worried about paying bills.

Shocking as it may seem, UNI's Upward Bound program introduced the option of college to me for the first time. The tutorial programs they host gave me structure and provided help with challenging subjects, which allowed me to keep a high grade point average. The summer program was the highlight of my experience; although strict and homework ridden, the college classes we attended was great preparation for attending a university, such as UNI. Because of Upward Bound and the mentorship of Wilfred "Micky" Johnson, last May I graduated from UNI with a 3.4 g.p.a. I am currently headed into my second year of graduate school here at UNI, and teaching Oral Communication to undergraduate students.

Without the opportunity of the Upward Bound program, I'm sure this story would have ended differently. The opportunity this program afforded me has more rewarding benefits than just educational. I am the first person in my family to graduate from college. As I will soon start my doctoral program, my children are being challenged to further their education. I am also in the process of buying my first home a feat my mother or father never achieved. For this I am forever indebted to this program. In conclusion, I would like to thank Wilfred "Micky" Johnson, Upward Bound (Trio), and the University of Northern Iowa for providing me and many others with an opportunity at success.

Sincerely,

Sherman Wise

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a proud mother of three. I am a lower middle class citizen and my son is a high school graduate and the first generation to go to college.

My son was in the Upward Bound Program. I believe my son wouldn't be where he is today without having the opportunity to be a part of this program. The program has taught him to be a leader in his personal growth and commitment to excellence. The tutorials helped him stay focused and the summer program gave him the taste of college life, which helped motivate him to go to college. Also the program is very informative and helpful when filling out scholarships, etc. Without this guidance, my son would not of had the recourses available for him to afford to go to college and further his education.

Where would my son be without the TRIO program? Answer: NOT as far as he is today.

The TRIO Program is a major asset to our society and economy as a whole. Without the commitment and recourses I believe some kids get lost in the shuffle. The children of today are "the future" and we must empower them to do so.

Thank you for your time,

Teresa Luloff