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### \$1.4M grant will support WKU's outreach to adult learners

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Martha Sales

Submitted

A \$1.4 million grant awarded to Western Kentucky University will support 1,000 adult learners throughout the region as they navigate their higher education journey.

WKU said Wednesday that it will receive a federal Educational Opportunity Centers grant through the U.S. Department of Education to help unemployed, low-wage workers and returning students continue their education.

“There is nothing like assisting adults with their college aspirations and success,” said Martha Sales, who will oversee the project as executive director of WKU’s TRIO Programs.

Federal-funded TRIO college programs support students from disadvantaged backgrounds in their pursuit of a college degree, and WKU’s EOC program has been active in that regard since 2002, according to a news release announcing the grant award.

“If I have said it once, I will say it 1.4 million times – TRIO programs work and WKU TRIO programs rock!” Sales said in the release.

The WKU EOC program works with students throughout southcentral Kentucky, including Allen, Barren, Butler, Edmonson, Hart, Logan, Metcalfe, Monroe, Simpson and Warren counties.

Through EOC, students can get help with counseling and college admissions support, along with financial literacy resources. The program offers academic and personal

counseling, tutoring and mentoring, career workshops and financial assistance, among other resources.

The program serves adults learners with limited English proficiency and others underrepresented in the higher education space, like people with disabilities, those who are housing insecure, young people who are aging out of foster care and other marginalized people.

“As systemic inequality and financial hardship discourage students from succeeding in college, TRIO programs like EOC take on new importance because they continue to help guide un- and underemployed workers and returning high school and college students toward earning a degree,” said Maureen Hoyler, president of the nonprofit Council for Opportunity in Education in Washington. “COE is dedicated to furthering the expansion of college opportunities for low-income, first-generation students, and students with disabilities nationwide.”

– *For more information about WKU's TRIO programs, go online to [wku.edu/trio](http://wku.edu/trio).*

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