

COLLEGE-GOING TOOLKIT

Information and Resources for Faith-Based Communities to Assist Members in Pursuing their College Dreams

15K Faith Action Team



The purpose of this toolkit is to provide leaders in faith-based communities with the information and resources needed to help guide their members in the pursuit of a postsecondary education.



INTRODUCTION

Whether members of your faith-based community themselves are considering attending college for the first time or are returning to college, or have family members interested in attending college, we hope this toolkit and accompanying resources serve as a useful guide.

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15K is an initiative to actively engage and mobilize Louisville’s African American community in support of 55,000 Degrees, the Greater Louisville Education Commitment and targeted plan to raise education levels by 2020.



55,000 Degrees is a public-private partnership whose mission is to launch Louisville into the top tier of our competitor cities with the bold goal of adding 40,000 bachelor’s degrees and 15,000 associate’s degrees by 2020.



GO College-Louisville is part of a national data-driven initiative that brings communities together to increase college access and success for low-income, first-generation, and minority students.



Since 1921, the Louisville Urban League has assisted disadvantaged people attain social and economic stability and prosperity. The organization was founded by a group of African Americans who were committed to providing positive role models and academic assistance for area youth.



TRIO is a set of federally-funded programs located in Louisville that help low-income and first-generation students and adults overcome class, social, academic, and cultural barriers to enter college and graduate.

Promoting College-Going and Success within Your Faith-Based Community

Start with Leadership and Commitment

- Set up a team of leaders in your faith-based community to take the lead on college access activities—or assign those tasks to an existing committee or organization.
- Faith leaders and youth counselors should periodically make strong statements about the importance of college.
- Work to assure that all faith leaders are passionate in their commitment to inspire and nurture the development of the whole person.

The College Access Team Should:

- Identify and acknowledge members in the community who have pursued and completed a postsecondary degree and encourage them to mentor others on their educational journeys.
- Create academic and social opportunities to support young people as well as adults who want to pursue a college degree.

Partner with Local Schools and TRIO Programs

- Meet regularly with Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) officials and Louisville TRIO programs to learn about opportunities to partner in college-going initiatives.
- Make your community's leadership, facilities, publications, youth and adult groups available as resources to support efforts by local schools and TRIO programs to help students attend college.



Activities

- 1 Work with local TRIO programs** to plan fun college-going activities such as college t-shirt rallies, choirs, usher boards, altar assistants and inspire your community leaders to be actively involved as role models. To contact Louisville TRIO programs, please email Mary Thorpe: mary.thorpe@louisville.edu.
- 2 Inspire your faith leaders** to be education role models in your congregation.
- 3 Host college tours and fairs** for members of your faith community to help raise their awareness and knowledge about college. TRIO program staff can help you plan these activities.
- 4 Schedule college-going mentoring, tutoring, test prep, and financial aid workshops** at your site for potential students and their families. TRIO, GO College – Louisville, and 15K program staff can help you facilitate these workshops.



Working with High School Students



Programs and Events

Planning for college should intensify in high school, and faith communities can be powerful forces in encouraging youth to think more seriously about their futures. Religious beliefs motivate many young people to serve others. Speak often with the young people in your faith community, help them identify their talents, and work with them to assure that they use education to multiply those talents.



- Provide youth opportunities for service and encourage them to include those activities in their college applications.
 - Invite young people who have gone to college to return and talk with youth groups about their experiences.
 - Celebrate your youth's academic accomplishments—whether it is making the honor roll, graduating from high school, or enrolling in college.
- Hold tutoring at your site.
 - Encourage youth leaders to discuss students' courses and grades with them at the beginning and end of each semester.

Parent and Family Engagement

- Work with GO College – Louisville (June Demus, jldemu01@exchange.louisville.edu) and TRIO in Jefferson County (Mary Thorpe, mary.thorpe@louisville.edu) to plan family nights to explain the importance of grades and test scores to your members.
- Work with GO College – Louisville and TRIO programs to sponsor “college application nights” to assist families and students in finding the money to go to college.
- Create a section in your community announcements dedicated to college-going information. GO College – Louisville and TRIO staff can help you draft materials.
- Encourage congregation leaders to let members know that they are willing to accompany family members to talk to principals and teachers if parents or other family members are reluctant to go alone.

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Working with Middle School Students

Programs and Events

Middle school is the perfect time to encourage students to challenge themselves academically and become involved in extracurricular and volunteer opportunities within your faith community. Helping young students build self-esteem and self-confidence will lead to their academic success through high school and post-secondary education. Discuss and showcase career and college options with your youth members to encourage and support their aspirations.

- Host book fairs to build students' reading comprehension and learning skills, which are fundamental to college success. Challenge your youth members to read both fiction and non-fiction books and later present a brief report at a special event.
- Organize a "Focus on College" event during your service, and ask your members to wear their college regalia or wear a shirt with their school name or mascot.
- Host out-of-school tutoring and mentoring services for students.
- For many young students, college is a long time away, so many put off thinking about it until they get to high school. However, college readiness should begin as soon as possible. Host talent and career exploration nights to facilitate a discussion of future potential career paths and interests.

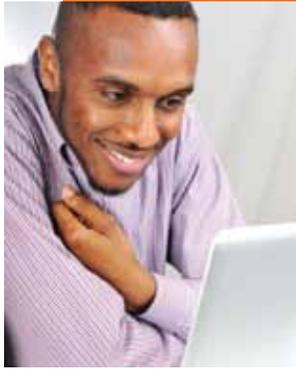
Helping young students build self-esteem and self-confidence will lead to their academic success.

Parent and Family Engagement

- Discuss with students that taking challenging classes in high school will boost their future educational, career, and income options. Work with your adult members, especially parents and families, to calculate college costs and develop a plan early.
- Encourage parents to participate as a family in community programs and team sports to build their children's self-esteem, instill a sense of responsibility, and encourage positive attitudes. Contact the Boys and Girls Club of Kentuckiana (www.bgckyna.org) for more information on programs.



- Promote "community learning" among your members, helping them to recognize that there are many places where learning should take place.
- Encourage parents to maintain regular communication with their children's schools, checking up on their progress and meeting with the teachers several times during the academic year.
- Encourage positive attitudes and behavior like always showing up, completing all assignments on time, and being respectful to teachers and counselors.



Working with Adult Learners

Programs and Events

Adults pursuing college later in life also need support and resources as they navigate the work-school-family balance. Encourage these individuals to pursue their educational goals. Talk about the importance of continuing education for further development of skills, higher career positions, and increased income. Remind members that they are serving as role models for youth in your faith community. Create a community of sharing and bring members together to talk about challenges and successes. Knowing that they have the support of their faith community in advancing their education or changing their career path will provide the extra motivation for adults to continue and succeed.

- Establish support groups of other like-minded individuals and invite TRIO professionals as well as members of the Louisville Urban League to present workshops.
- Many classes today require technology for coursework. Encourage members who are more technologically advanced to lead workshops for those looking to learn new technology skills.
- Encourage your leadership and members to build upon existing resources such as evening childcare for those in night classes and computer labs for online learning.
- Facilitate an encouraging environment by asking individuals to set goals and announce their success in achieving those goals; thereby inspiring others, including younger students.
- Celebrate accomplishments just as with younger students by announcing acceptance and graduation news, and congratulating members on career changes.

Adults pursuing college later in life also need support and resources as they navigate the work-school balance.

Keep in mind that some adult members may face job losses because their skills are no longer in demand. They may find themselves having to return to college to get necessary training. Use TRIO programs, GO College – Louisville, and the social networks of your members and invite representatives from local universities and colleges, hiring managers, and other professionals in a variety of career fields for informational nights of career and skill exploration.

Financial Aid and Planning

Tuition is a main concern of adults returning to school. Most are already juggling multiple financial demands, some are raising families, and many don't have the resources or time to look into financial planning for college. Connect with your local TRIO Educational Opportunity Center (EOC) at Kentuckiana Works (www.mykcac.org) to identify materials tailored to adults.

- Host budgeting and financial planning workshops with the Kentuckiana EOC to discuss monthly budgeting. Share information on the costs of credits and courses at area colleges.
- Make available lists of scholarships, grants, loans, and other funding sources specific to the needs of the adults in your community.
- Make sure adults are invited to the college application and financial aid workshops your congregation sponsors.
- Most importantly, provide encouragement, support, and be an advocate for the success of those adults within your faith community looking to return to school and further their education.

Resources

- **15K**
To contact 15K, email info@15kdegrees.org or call Rae Helton at 502-436-3245.
- **Boys and Girls Club**
To contact the Boys and Girls Club of Kentuckiana, call Jennifer Helgeson at 502-585-5437 and visit www.bgckyana.org.
- **GO College – Louisville**
To contact GO College – Louisville, email June Demus at jldemu01@exchange.louisville.edu.
- **Interdenominational Ministerial Coalition**
To contact the Interdenominational Ministerial Coalition, call Rev. Dr. Frank M. Smith, Jr. at 502-648-2446.
- **Jefferson Community and Technical College TRIO programs**
To contact Jefferson Community and Technical College TRIO programs, email Wynobie Williams at Wynobie.Williams@kctcs.edu.



- **Jefferson County Public Schools**
To contact Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS), email Pamela Royster at Pamela.royster@jefferson.kyschools.us and Carol Montgomery at Carol.montgomery@jefferson.kyschools.us.
- **Kentuckiana Works EOC**
To contact Kentuckiana Works Educational Opportunity Center (EOC), please visit www.mykcac.org/aboutus/educational_opportunity_center.asp.
- **Kentuckiana Works TRIO**
To contact Kentuckiana Works TRIO programs, email Debbie.lindsey@kentuckianaworks.org.
- **Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA)**
To contact KHEAA, please visit www.kheaa.com.
- **Louisville Urban League**
To contact the Louisville Urban League, please visit www.lul.org.
- **Signature Partnership Education Access Center (SPEAC)**
SPEAC is a partnership of the Jefferson Community and Technical College, Simmons College of Kentucky, Spalding University and University of Louisville. For more information, please call 502-852-5000.
- **Simmons College of Kentucky**
To contact Simmons College of Kentucky, please visit www.simmonscollegeky.edu.
- **Spalding University**
To contact Spalding University, please visit www.spalding.edu.
- **University of Louisville TRIO programs**
To contact University of Louisville TRIO programs, email Mary Thorpe at mary.thorpe@louisville.edu.



Partners



Developed with
the support of

