First Generation Student – Trio

VFTH

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First generation college students get a huge boost from TRiO, an organization that started with three programs in 1965 as part of the higher education act.

A WKU student who grew up in a Thailand refugee camp explains how TRiO has been a big part of her success in this week’s View from the Hill.

This Saturday is National TRiO day and WKU is marking the occasion by hosting an open house from ten until four at their offices in Jones Jaggers Hall. TRiO offers crucial support to first generation college students.

“This like my second home.”

Junior Schwe Winn is talking about Student Support Services, one of several TRIO programs offered at WKU.

The public health major is a first generation college student who first came to America when she was seven.

“As a kid I grew up in a refugee camp. It was located on the border of Myanmar and Thailand. In 2008 we came under refugee resettlement program and we were located in Bowling Green Kentucky.”

When she was a senior at Greenwood High School, Winn became aware of TRIO through it’s Educational Talent Search.

“I was able to get support to apply to colleges. I got to meet an amazing person named Ms. Shaw who has helped me figure out what I want to become and really take my hand and she walks me through every step of what I need to do to be where I am today.”

Shaw was a first generation college student herself who benefitted from TRiO programs as an undergrad at the University of Southern Indiana.

“I loved the program so much I had to go back to school. I went back and got my Master’s degree just so I could come back and work in TRiO.”

“I completely understand what they’re going through, I do. We know with most of our students it’s not the academic work that’s too hard for them it’s everything outside of it. So the finances, what’s going on at home, things going on personally such as mental health.”

Win wants to make sure other students realize the benefits of TRiO.

“I want the word to spread because I know the value of this program and I want every other kid to have the opportunities that I had.”

To be eligible for the TRiO program you must answer yes to one of the following questions. Are you a first generation college student, do you receive a pell grant or do you have a documented disability on file with the university.

With this week’s View from the Hill, I’m Amy Bingham.

225 Hilltoppers are served by TRiO’s Student Support Services.

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