



**Hannah Bennett**  
TRIO SSS

My name is Hannah Bennett and I am a first-generation college student. I have been self-supporting since I was a senior in high school. My path to higher education has been hard and very lonely. As a young person, I did not have a stable childhood. My father was never in my life. My mother is borderline schizophrenic. My mother's mental illness caused her to be abusive and made it hard for her to hold down a job, thus I was homeless for many years during my childhood.

Despite being homeless and missing countless days of school- including half of my junior year in high school- I was very dedicated to my education. I knew that an education was going to help me achieve my dreams. My senior year of high school I switched schools for the third and final time before my mom abandoned me with our apartment 3 months behind on rent. With no electricity and no running water, I had nowhere to go. I persevered. I lived there for a month while I worked and saved to get my own place. I graduated in 2012 from Hoquiam Homelink with honors and a 3.90 GPA. I attended Grays Harbor College full time where I became heavily involved on campus. I was the student government's Executive Officer of Government Relations and a work study in TRIO Student Support Services.

The staff in TRIO helped me navigate the difficulties of college. They provided me with the academic and personal support I needed to be a successful and an influential student. The ladies at the Grays Harbor's TRIO office have been my mentors, teachers, and friends. They have seen me on my best days and my worst, and they always encouraged me to keep going. Working as an assistant in the TRIO office has provided me with invaluable professional experience. And inspired me to want to help others succeed. This is the very foundation for my future career path. The staff at TRIO provided me with extensive knowledge of how to successfully apply for scholarships and helped me transfer from a community college to a university. I graduated from GHC in 2015 with honors and a 3.70 GPA before transferring to Western Washington University. My entire undergraduate degree is costing me less than \$10,000, because of the scholarships I received. I could not have done this without the help of Grays Harbor College's TRIO staff. The TRIO program is a life changer.

After completing my BA this June, I plan to earn a Master's degree in Organizational Leadership. An Organizational Leadership degree will teach me to lead change, allow me to demonstrate alternative models that condition and connect our knowledge of how the world is organized, and open up a wide range of career possibilities. I want to make a global impact. After receiving my Master's, I plan to establish a career in political and social reform. By overcoming the obstacles I faced at such a young age, I hope to teach others that their struggles can empower them.



## Student Success Services

Through a grant competition, funds are awarded to institutions of higher education to provide opportunities for academic development, assist students with basic college requirements, and to motivate students toward the successful completion of their postsecondary education. Student Support Services (SSS) projects also may provide grant aid to current SSS participants who are receiving Federal Pell Grants (# 84.063). The goal of SSS is to increase the college retention and graduation rates of its participants.

All SSS projects must provide: academic tutoring, which may include instruction in reading, writing, study skills, mathematics, science, and other subjects; advice and assistance in postsecondary course selection, assist student with information on both the full range of student financial aid programs, benefits and resources for locating public and private scholarships; and assistance in completing financial aid applications. Education or counseling services designed to improve the financial and economic literacy and assist students in applying for admission to graduate and professional programs; and assist students enrolled in two-year institutions and applying for admission to, and obtaining financial assistance for enrollment in four-year programs. The SSS projects may also provide individualized counseling for personal, career, and academic information, activities, and instruction designed to acquaint students with career options; exposure to cultural events and academic programs not usually available; mentoring programs, securing temporary housing during breaks for students who are homeless youths and students who are in foster care or are aging out of the foster care system.

# TRIO