


Tha Dah Hser

TRiO

Born and raised in a refugee camp in Thailand, Hser came to the U.S. with her family when she was 13 years old. “I wanted to come to the U.S. for a better education and to have a better life,” said Hser, who earned her associate degree at Highline College in the spring of 2015.

“I was born in the Mae Sot district of Thailand, but my ethnicity is Karen,” she said, noting that the Karen people live mainly in Burma (Myanmar). “I came to Seattle in August 2007 as a refugee. My goal is to one day go back to my country and help my people.”

Helping others has been a constant theme for Hser. While at Highline, she served as a TRiO Student Ambassador, a mentor in the Burmese community and a member of the Honors Leadership Team. Her passion for helping others earned her a Leadership 1000 scholarship — worth \$5,000 a year for up to four years — which she will use to study social work at the University of Washington beginning in the fall. Being of service to others while in college was important to Hser. She experienced firsthand how challenging it can be for a first-generation college student to adapt and succeed in postsecondary education.

“When I had a question or concern about school, I would always ask advice from a TRiO program adviser. There is no one in my family who I can ask for help because they do not have higher education experience,” she said. Hser made the most of her time in the program, participating in numerous TRiO-related events, activities and services. “As a Student Ambassador, I really enjoyed meeting new students and sharing the information that made a difference in my school experience,” said Hser, who would tell others how TRiO helps students keep on track with their studies and prepares them for a four-year college or university.

Hser credits TRiO courses and program advisers with helping guide her on the right path to pursue a four-year degree. But she is also a believer in TRiO because it brings together a cohort of students, many of whom are first-generation like she is. Being part of the program allowed Hser to “meet with other TRiO members and share personal school experiences with one another and help out each other.” I have been able to be successful in college and make strides toward future goals because of TRiO. “I want to earn a master’s degree in social welfare and travel to Burma as a volunteer,” said Hser.

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As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.



TRIO Projects

The Federal TRIO Programs (TRIO) are Federal outreach and student services programs designed to identify and provide services for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds. TRIO includes eight programs targeted to serve and assist low-income individuals, first-generation college students, and individuals with disabilities to progress through the academic pipeline from middle school to postbaccalaureate programs. TRIO also includes a training program for directors and staff of TRIO projects.

The recipients of the grants, depending on the specific program, are institutions of higher education, public and private agencies and organizations including community-based organizations with experience in serving disadvantaged youth and secondary schools. Combinations of such institutions, agencies, and organizations may also apply for grants. These entities plan, develop and carry out the services for students. While individual students are served by these entities, they may not apply for grants under these programs. Additionally, in order to be served by one of these programs, a student must be eligible to receive services and be accepted into a funded project that serves the institution or school that student is attending or the area in which the student lives.

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