

PRESS RELEASE

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SAEOPP & T-MOBILE: A HISTORIC PARTNERSHIP TO COMBAT DIGITAL POVERTY EXPERIENCED BY TRIO PRE-COLLEGIATE STUDENTS

Project 10 Million Comes To TRiO Programs – Southeast

Dateline: Norcross, Georgia (April 26, 2021) — The Southeastern Association of Educational Opportunity Program Personnel (SAEOPP) is proud to partner with T-Mobile's Project 10Million (P10M) program to provide our first-generation and lower socioeconomic students with FREE internet access specifically for those who do not have reliable access at home. The P10M mission is to help 10 million families or households who do not have reliable Internet access at home reach their full potential by giving them mobile devices and free high-speed Internet access. This initiative resulted from an unlikely "Link Up via LinkedIn" between the SAEOPP Upward Bound Director Dr. John Mason and Dr. Kiesha Taylor, the National Education Administrator for T-Mobile. After a brief follow-up conversation, it was clear that T-Mobile's Project 10 Million would serve a host of TRiO students in the Southeast and eventually across the country. On May 15, 2021, this historic partnership will launch with students and families from the SAEOPP Upward Bound Programs and the Georgia State University's Upward Bound Programs receiving the benefits of the T-Mobile P10M pledge - hotspots with 100GB for the next five years for low-income students.

Why is SAEOPP taking on this global problem? We have a severe problem with digital equity. Students are unable to function in an environment that demands technology and access to the internet effectively. For example, in our country, 70% of America's school teachers assign homework to be completed online. However, more than 5 million families with school-aged children do not have reliable internet connectivity at home. This "Homework Gap" disconnect leads to dramatically inequitable outcomes among our students, specifically those from the lower socioeconomic quartile. Without access to these free internet services, the go-to solution is to do their homework at fast-food restaurants or youth clubs, where the Wi-Fi is free. Other students spend hours in restaurant parking lots. Many also wait in long lines

at libraries to secure the time online to complete their homework. Again, this isn't fair, it isn't right, and SAEOPP does not believe it needs to happen.

This is why SAEOPP and P10M are teaming together to address an action plan for reducing and eliminating the digital divide. In conjunction with providing portable technology to all TRIO high school pipeline programs. We intend that by providing programs that focus on both equipment and access, we will eliminate all barriers to learning and provide our students more time to study, imagine, create, accomplish, and graduate.

Dr. Kiesha Taylor, the National Education Administrator for T-Mobile, states, "According to the National Center for Education Statistics' Condition of Education 2019 report, in 2017 just 49% of families making less than \$20,000 a year had home internet access. And of the families who didn't have home internet access, 34% said they could not afford it. That's three million students. To put this number into perspective, this would be like shutting down internet access to the entire state of Nevada."

"In today's world, internet access is no longer a luxury, it's a necessity. Just as students cannot learn without proper shelter, nutritious food, and safe spaces, neither can they learn without the right tools," continued Dr. Iris Garner, K-12 Education Industry Segment Advisor at T-Mobile. This isn't an academic exercise: when these students leave school, they will be ill-prepared to achieve in a fast-moving world dominated by digital technologies and constant change."

The SAEOPP Upward Bound program is an intensive, year-round college-preparatory program. Our mission is to instill and foster the necessary skills, talents, and motivation needed for each participant to successfully graduate from high school, enroll in, and complete their college education. We will create a culture where each student is immersed in an atmosphere where knowledge, skills, and new technologies shape their college-going future. Our efforts are in collaboration with specific target high schools and the greater Gwinnett community.

The TRIO programs are the primary federal programs providing support services to disadvantaged students to promote secondary and postsecondary education achievement. The Higher Education Amendments of 1968 (P.L. 90-575) consolidated a "trio" of programs, including the Upward Bound Program, under one overall umbrella of services.

The TRIO programs have been designed to encourage and prepare qualified individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds for success throughout the educational pipeline from secondary school to undergraduate and graduate education. While the TRIO programs primarily serve low-income, first-generation college students, they also serve students with disabilities, veterans, homeless youth, foster youth, and individuals underrepresented in graduate education.

For further information, please contact

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