

# Marquette University: Educational Opportunity Program receives \$800,000 in funding to pilot Cyber Explorers pre-college program

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MILWAUKEE — Marquette University's Educational Opportunity Program has received \$799,500 in funding from the U.S. Department of Education to pilot the Seizing Opportunities Academic Readiness (SOAR) Cyber Explorers Pilot Program, which provides teaching and learning activities to precollege students to encourage interest in STEM careers, support college readiness and begin developing skills for careers in technology, particularly cybersecurity.

The SOAR pilot will provide over 100 hours of programming for 50 Cyber Explorers comprising low-income and first-generation students and other middle and high school students in the Milwaukee area. Cyber Explorers will participate summer camps, coursework, internships and mentoring which will develop students' knowledge and skills across four areas: computer basics, coding, operating systems and networks.

"On behalf of EOP, I want to thank Rep. Gwen Moore and Sen. Tammy Baldwin for championing this project," said Laiya Thomas, executive director of EOP. "SOAR builds upon the longstanding success of Marquette's EOP in providing college readiness and STEM pipeline services. The program will also benefit from the expertise of our nationally recognized Cyber Security and Cyber Defense Center, K-12 computer science education grantees from our Department of Computer Science and two EOP alumni who are computer science instructors."

In addition to the on-campus opportunities for Cyber Explorers, the pilot program

includes outreach to hundreds of middle and high school students and a subgroup of students enrolled in Milwaukee Public Schools, Dr. Howard Fuller Collegiate Academy or Milwaukee Academy of Sciences. Through this network, partner schools will host presentations and workshops to support college readiness by educating students on opportunities for college access programs, such as Marquette's EOP, as well as ways to develop good study skills, choose rigorous coursework and engage in activities to enhance their extracurricular resumes.

Rep. Moore is a Marquette alumnae and member of its first-ever EOP graduating class. She also co-chairs the Congressional TRIO Caucus, a bipartisan, bicameral group in Congress supportive of the Federal TRIO Programs and higher education access for low-income, first-generation students and students with disabilities.

In 2020, EOP celebrated 50 years of serving students who are historically underrepresented in higher education, including students who have the potential of being the first in their families to graduate from college and students from diverse economic backgrounds.

EOP was created as an institutional program under the leadership of Arnold Mitchem in 1969, who went on to serve as the president of the Council for Opportunity in Education. The program started with just 40 students and one staff member, but the incredible students, along with supportive faculty, staff, university leadership and the Milwaukee community, helped EOP flourish into what became a model for other college access and opportunity programs and the United States Department of Education's federally funded TRIO programs, which are located on college campuses throughout the country.