

Upward Bound Program at SWOSU Marks 50th Anniversary

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Jamie Novey

The Upward Bound program at Southwestern Oklahoma State University is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year.

SWOSU was one of three universities in the state of Oklahoma to have the first programs. The other sites were East Central University and Southeastern Oklahoma State University.

The SWOSU Upward Bound program has served thousands of students in its 50 years. At the height of funding, SWOSU's program had 200 students enrolled each year.

Upward Bound is a federally funded program that aids students who meet certain income guidelines and academic standards to better prepare for college. The program began as part of Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty in 1964. Upward Bound is one of eight TRIO programs facilitated by the U.S. Department of Education that motivates and assists students at different stages in the educational journey.

SWOSU's Director of Upward Bound Jamie Novey said students begin the Upward Bound program as freshmen or sophomores in high school. The students meet on two Saturdays every month to prepare for the ACT, improve study skills, tour colleges and receive tutoring. During the summer, Upward Bound students spend six weeks on the Weatherford campus living in the residence halls, participating in cultural activities and studying in an academic environment. The summer program allows students to experience a college setting.

When students graduate from high school, their last summer is spent taking five to six hours of college credit at SWOSU. Students take classes in composition and literature, math, chemistry, physics, astronomy, robotics, forensic studies, Spanish, sign language and financial literacy as well as fine arts classes in the evenings.

"The longer students remain in the program, the more likely they are to graduate from high school and enroll in college," Novey said. "Upward Bound students do well in college because they are prepared."

For many high school students, a college education seems like an impossible dream. Students face a number of barriers that either prevents them from going to college or from being successful if they do go. Novey said the greatest barrier to higher education is the lack of opportunity. Many students are interested in college but do not have the resources and support necessary to make their college experience a successful one.

Novey said she sees real success in the Upward Bound Program and that students gain experience that furthers their potential and leads to positive outcomes.

"I'm a product of Upward Bound," Novey said, "and I know that without the program, I wouldn't have gone to college."

Upward Bound currently serves around 85 students per year. For more information, contact Novey at 580.774.7129.