



### **2013 NEOA ACHIEVER ~ Patricia Marshall, Ph.D.**

*Patricia Marshall participated in TRIO through Upward Bound (UB) & Talent Search (ETS) at the University of Maine in 1986-1990. The ETS Director then was David Megquier, who also nominated Dr. Marshall for this award.*

I hold a B.A. *summa cum laude* from Colby College and a Ph.D. from Brown University. I am a professor of Spanish at Worcester State University, where I currently serve as the Associate VP for Academic Affairs. I have 17 years of teaching experience, serve as the principal investigator on WSU's Vision Grant (dedicated to access and to the elimination of disparities in higher education), and have spearheaded student success efforts at WSU for the past three years.

I am also a first-generation college student whose mother left school in the eighth grade. I spent my entire childhood living below the poverty level. Growing up in rural Maine, many basic material comforts did not form part of my childhood experience. For several years my mother and I lived in a 30-foot long mobile home and we used a metal pail to draw water from a hand-dug well. When I was in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, we moved into a bigger trailer, but we still continued to lug water to heat on the stove for bathing, used a small pot to relieve ourselves while inside, and frequented the outhouse when the weather permitted.

After this move my father once again became part of our lives and I feared for my physical safety while experiencing first-hand the roller coaster of domestic violence. I took refuge in books and decided that the best way to change my life was doing well in school. Since the fighting between my parents affected my ability to study, this was often easier said than done.

I moved into an old van in our yard and heaped mountains of old sleeping bags on a mattress and coerced my dog to sleep beside me to stay warm. My first study cubicle also needed light, so I ran an extension cord and hung one of my father's work lights from the van ceiling. I spent countless hours studying and finished the 8<sup>th</sup> grade with straight A's and determined to do well in high school and to go to college.

I had no proof that my plan was going to work out, but TRIO was fundamental to my success. I had no role models and going to college was not part of the master narrative in my family. TRIO advisors, like David Megquier, showed an interest in my success and provided the academic and personal coaching that kept me on the right path. UB gave me the opportunity to live on a college campus, to explore career options, and also provided me with a support system and a sense of community. UB helped me to remain focused and I was able to envision how my life would truly be transformed through higher education.

While all students do not arrive at college ready to play on a level playing field, TRIO provided me with more than a level playing field when I arrived at Colby College. I arrived confident in my abilities and soon realized that, strangely enough, I had more experience living in a college environment than most of my peers. I was well-poised for success due to programs that wrapped their arms around me and gave me the support that I needed at a critical time in my life.

I have two daughters who will never have to ask *if* they will go to college, but instead ask *where* they will attend. The cycle of poverty has been broken, and I am living proof that TRIO works. In my roles as a professor and as a college administrator I have touched thousands of lives over the last 18 years, and have dedicated my professional life to paying the TRIO investment forward.