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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Staff Up Congress Launches Second Professional Training Academy to Increase Staff Diversity on the Hill**

*The Staff Up Congress Communications Academy, second of three professional development tracks, will tackle dismal diversity rates in senior Hill staff by helping junior members of color become communications directors*

**Washington, DC** – With fewer than 14 percent of senior staff positions on Capitol Hill belonging to people of color, today, Staff Up Congress – a national initiative by NALEO Educational Fund and the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies to build a representative congressional workforce – launched the second in a series of professional training academies to prepare talented people of color for senior staff positions.

The Communications Academy follows the Legislative Academy – which concluded in October and targeted future legislative directors – in a series of three professional development tracks offered by Staff Up Congress. Over the course of seven sessions, a bipartisan cohort of current and former House and Senate staffers will cover the skills and knowledge aspiring Capitol Hill communications directors need to succeed.

“Senior Senate and House staffers work directly with the public and influence the big decisions made in Washington – so it is critical that they better reflect the communities they serve,” said **Arturo Vargas, CEO of NALEO Educational Fund**. “Since we launched Staff Up Congress last year, we have seen an incredible amount of diverse talent waiting to be tapped for senior level positions. This new Communications Academy will position Hill staffers of color for the next generation of leadership on Capitol Hill.”

“The new Congress includes more Latino and African American Members than ever before – but the presence of diverse elected officials is not enough,” said **Spencer Overton, President of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies**. “The Staff Up Congress Communications Academy will help ensure we boost the lackluster rates of diversity among senior communication staffers, who play a pivotal role in public influence, and strong policymaking.”

Staff Up Congress was launched in November 2017 in response to chronic underrepresentation of people of color in top congressional staff jobs. According to a

Joint Center [report on staff diversity](#) released in September 2018, only 13.7 percent of top House staffers were people of color, despite people of color making up 38 percent of the U.S. population. Staff Up Congress is working to grow the pool of candidates of color for senior positions, develop candidates' skills and networks', build a sustainable pipeline of candidates from the entry level to the chief of staff, and urge hiring managers to actively consider, recruit, and hire in an inclusive manner.

The Staff Up Congress Communications Academy will accept applications through Jan. 25. The seven-session academy will cover processes and best practices on various topics, including: writing in your member's voice; booking your member on TV and radio; working with internal and external stakeholders; working with reporters; crisis communications; and communications planning for dropping a bill.

Participants will be announced on Feb. 19, and the academy's sessions will take place on Feb. 22, March 1, 15, and 22. Participants who complete all seven sessions will receive a certificate upon completion of the program.

In addition to the Legislative Academy and Communications Academy, Staff Up Congress plans to launch a Senior Management Academy to prepare current and former staffers for the role of chief of staff.

Those interested in participating in the Communications Academy or learning more about Staff Up Congress can visit <https://www.staffupcongress.com/>.

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#### **About NALEO Educational Fund**

NALEO Educational Fund is the nation's leading non-profit, non-partisan organization that facilitates full participation of Latinos in the American political process, from citizenship to public service.

#### **About the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies**

The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies is a non-partisan, non-profit public policy organization that supports elected officials and policy experts who serve communities of color across the country.