



THE PILLAR

A MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE TRIO SSS COMMUNITY

“Helping Students Realize Their Full Potential”



April 2026

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Mission Statement

The University of Colorado Denver TRIO Student Support Services Program is a holistic student development program that is dedicated to helping each student reach his or her full academic potential.

Student Spotlight — Angel Lupian Alvarez



The TRIO Student Support Services program is happy to spotlight Angel Lupian Alvarez. He has been an active member of the program since the fall of 2024. He will be graduating with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration degree in Accounting with a minor in Finance this semester. As a first-generation college student, his journey has been interesting and filled with many opportunities. One of Angel's strongest attributes is his solid work ethic. He has done an excellent job at managing his academic, personal, social, and work responsibilities. He started working in the TRIO SSS Program as an Office Assistant and quickly moved into a Peer Mentor position where he has connected with other fellow first-generation college students. He has successfully completed several business internships and made the Business School Dean's List several consecutive times.

When asked what his college experience was like he noted, “I have had an amazing experience in college that has really shaped both my academic and personal growth. Academically, pursuing Accounting and Finance challenged me to think critically and pushed me to develop strong problem-solving skills.” Angel decided to be actively involved on campus and joined business organizations including Beta Alpha Psi and the First Generation and Multicultural Business Program that allowed him to build meaningful relationships, grow as a leader, and connect with professionals in the field. Through internships, networking events, and mentorship opportunities, he has been able to explore his career interests while gaining real-world experience. Overall, his college journey has been incredibly rewarding and has prepared him for the next step in his career.

When asked how TRIO has played a role in his journey Angel stated, “TRIO believed in me and provided the resources I needed at the right moments. Having someone like Henry support me since day one truly made a difference in my confidence and growth.” Angel's advice to other TRIO participants would be to get as involved as possible, take advantage of the resources, build relationships, and fully engage in opportunities available to you.

His biggest challenge in his undergraduate journey was finding fluency in professional environments. He noted, “Coming into college, I was not always sure how to navigate professional spaces, communicate with confidence, or present myself in the way expected in those settings. Through experiences like networking events, internships, and leadership roles, I have gradually become more comfortable and confident.” He learned how to build relationships, ask thoughtful questions, and carry himself professionally.

*Work hard,
Dream BIG!*

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Student Spotlight—Continued



When asked what his favorite memory in college was, he shared, “My favorite memory in college has been meeting some of the most amazing people through programs like the First Generation and Multicultural Business Program. The relationships I have built go far beyond academics they’ve become lifelong connections with people whose names and impact I will carry with me forever. There’s a real sense of community and brotherhood that was built through those experiences, and it’s something I will always be grateful for.” In addition, Angel was asked about one thing he wished he was told when he started college. He mentioned, “Your future is truly in your hands. The effort you put in, the relationships you build, and the opportunities you pursue all shape what you get out of the experience. College gives you the platform, but it’s up to you to make the most of it.”

His short-term goals include passing at least three sections of the CPA exam, finishing his final semester with strong academic performance, and earning a full-time offer with EY after completing his internship. His long-term goal is to complete a master’s degree in accounting and to continue to develop his career in public accounting with the goal of becoming a partner at EY. One of the first things he would do if he won a million dollars would be allocate it strategically, likely investing in real estate to generate passive income. He shared, “My goal would be to make the money work for me and create long-term financial growth rather than spending it all at once.”

His hobbies include going to the gym and staying active. He really values his quiet morning routine. Waking up early, having a cup of coffee, and listening to calm music is something he genuinely looks forward to helping reset and start his day with clarity. His favorite quote is “Speak less, listen more.” It resonates with him because he’s learned that there is a lot of power in silence. When you listen more than you speak, you gain a deeper understanding of others, learn from different perspectives, and grow in ways you wouldn’t otherwise.” Angel noted, “To me, silence isn’t empty, it’s where the most learning happens.” Angel is committed to staying disciplined and consistent so he can successfully transition from being a student to a young professional in the accounting field. We wish him continued success in his personal and academic endeavors. YOU DID IT!

CU Denver Campus Resource—Center for Access and Campus Engagement

The [Center for Access and Campus Engagement](#) (CACE) aims to address the opportunity gaps in higher education by implementing research-based programs and high-impact practices designed to increase the educational access for all undergraduate students at the University of Colorado Denver (CU Denver). CACE creates learning environments that actively engage and empower undergraduate students by offering support and resources that enhance their educational experience at CU Denver. CACE is located in Student Commons Building, Suite #2105. The telephone number is (303) 315-1880.

Colorado LiftED Foundation First Generation Volunteer Opportunity



The Colorado LiftED Foundation, is an out of school time program that provides post-secondary pathway exploration and scholarship support for high school students in Southwest Denver. In late April, the organization will be hosting a First Generation Student Panel.

If you are a first-generation college student and interested in volunteering as panelist, please send our [TRIO SSS Program Coordinator](#) an email noting your interest by Monday, April 6th.

Date: Wednesday April 29th

Time: 4:30 pm—5:30 pm

Location: Blossom House (3300 W. Nevada Pl.)

Laura Garcia Sanchez | TRIO SSS Program Coordinator

TRIO SSS Program Staff



Please schedule your meetings with student and professional staff using the Calendly links below.
The second TRIO SSS Book Scholarship deadline is Friday, May 15, 2026.



Rafael Orozco
TRIO Director



Isabella Luna
TRIO Project Specialist



Henry R. Ornelas
TRIO SSS
Program Manager
[Schedule with Henry!](#)



Laura Garcia Sanchez
TRIO SSS
Program Coordinator
[Schedule with Laura!](#)



Reyna Anaya
Major: Sociology
Available Tues-Thurs.
[Schedule with Reyna!](#)



Angel Lupian Alvarez
Major: Accounting
Available Mon & Wed.
[Schedule with Angel!](#)



Laisha Ortega Jaquez
Major: Biology
Available Mon-Wed and select
Fridays
[Schedule with Laisha!](#)



Natalie Ramirez
Major: Biology
Available Mon, Wed, Thurs
[Schedule with Natalie!](#)



Maya Roberson
Major: International Studies
Available Tues & Thurs
[Schedule with Maya!](#)



Zinah Ghafoori
TRIO SSS
Office Assistant
Major: Engineering

Reflection: Overcoming Failure in College



I failed my first college course - When I saw that "F" on my transcript and that low GPA, I honestly thought my life was over.

For the longest time, my academics mattered. In high school and middle school, many of my peers knew I was huge in prioritizing my academics and I would earn good grades. Until that first semester in college, I failed my first college class ever. I genuinely was dumbfounded and did not know how to process such an event because my thought process was, "What am I going to tell my parents?" Of course, many would think, what do your parents have to do with this. But let me get into it. Some of you may understand or resonate with me when I say, being a first-generation student in college is hard. As a first-generation student, we set these high expectations of ourselves because we feel this pressure from our families to perform well, especially if we are one of the few to pursue higher education. So, here I am, freaking out that I failed my class because not only do I feel that I left myself down, but that I let my parents down. Additionally, I had to worry about being behind on my schedule and having to financially cover the class if I was going to have to retake it. There are so many little factors that come to play in this time of distress that comes with failing in college.

Honestly, I held this grudge towards myself because if only I passed that class that first time, I would have never had to retake the course multiple times and end up having to take other classes the next semester and go off schedule. Also, my GPA would have been a lot better. Yet, the truth is I didn't know, nor did I know how college worked. It took me some time to give myself some grace. Now that I am a senior, looking back, I would say I am honestly glad that it happened to a sort of extent. You may be like why? The reason is that it humbled me, and I needed that. It humbled me by showing me that I will not always get what I want. Sometimes I must put in more work if I want to get the results I want. Additionally, this small experience taught me to navigate through failure. I went from being a good student in college to struggling in college. No one told me how to process failure; I had to learn and seek help on my own. Experiencing failure taught me how to do better and come up with different methods. Mentally, I learned how to stay resilient and be kind to myself. I even started to look for assistance from other peers and resources on campus, which I totally recommend you check out.

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Reflection: Overcoming Failure in College—Continued



So, here I am being open about it because no one talks about it and I want to reassure you, the reader, if you ever felt ashamed of a time you failed, that everything will be okay. I think failure is part of the human life that many people need to go through to grow mentally, physically, and spiritually. Without failure, we wouldn't know what winning or striving feels like. There must be a balance in both. Always remember, even though failure doesn't feel good, it is only temporary, and it is up to you if you let it break you or make you. Also, know, you are not alone in this journey, many people experience failure. So, never feel ashamed of it, but embrace it and allow it to change

you as a person and become resilient. Give yourself grace because as a first-generation student, we are always learning how to adapt to new and unfamiliar environments.

JOURNAL PROMPTS

- ✓ Have you ever had a time where you failed? If so, how did it make you feel and how did you overcome it?
- ✓ How would you describe failure?
- ✓ Have you experienced someone else failing and how did you learn from their experience?
- ✓ List different ways you can overcome failure.
- ✓ Write self-affirmations to look over when you need motivation after failing something important.

Natalie Ramirez | TRIO Peer Mentor | Biology

National Financial Literacy Month

APRIL IS DESIGNATED AS NATIONAL FINANCIAL LITERACY MONTH! SO WHY CELEBRATE?



It is a great way for students to take a step back and improve their financial situation and skills. During my educational journey as a first-generation college student, I qualified for my first credit card. I had no understanding of what was involved (interest rates, monthly payments, etc.). I quickly spent this money and struggled to pay my first credit card. Financial stress was apparent for me! Students might be working two jobs to help support their families or feeling isolated because of financial stress.

Financial Literacy Month aims to promote, advocate for, and support financial literacy efforts so that students can build a strong financial background. Financial literacy is not just focusing on a budget, credit or saving. It includes much more. Financial wellness gives students the tools and confidence to understand their final situation to create a lasting impact. Here is where you could go to learn more and develop your financial skills:

- CU Denver, Wellness & Recreation Services >> Tuesday, April 21st >> [Getting Ahead on Student Loan Repayment](#)
 - TRIO SSS >> [Online Enrich Financial Literacy Sessions](#) >> There are many courses to choose from. Below is a short list of topics...
- | | | | |
|---------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| ✓ Filing Your Taxes | ✓ Buying or Leasing a Car | ✓ Using Credit Cards Responsibility | ✓ Living/Planning in Retirement |
| ✓ Saving for Goals | ✓ Getting Out of Debt | ✓ Managing Financial Stress | ✓ Investing to Build Wealth |
| ✓ Buying a Home | ✓ Repaying Your Student Loans | ✓ Setting Up Emergency Funds | ✓ Understanding Credit Reports |
| ✓ Creating a Budget | ✓ Searching for Unclaimed Property | ✓ Understanding Health Insurance | ✓ Assessing Your Insurance Needs |

HOPEFULLY, DURING APRIL, YOU CAN STRENGTHEN YOUR FINANCIAL LITERACY SKILLS!

Henry R. Ornelas | TRIO SSS Program Manager

April Awareness Month

As we step foot into the last stretch of the semester, we would like to highlight a couple of April's monthly awareness topics: Autism Acceptance Month and Sexual Assault Awareness Month!

Autism Acceptance Month was founded in 1970 by autism researcher, Bernard Rimland, placed in the month of April in honor of his son's birthday and the start of spring! The symbol for Autism Awareness Month is a rainbow infinity sign. It recognizes that Autism is "more than a diagnosis—it is identity, community, and a lived experience that encompasses both challenges and triumphs" (Roth). The Autism Acceptance Movement advocates for change, inclusivity, and new opportunities to bloom alongside the season of spring!



Alongside Autism Acceptance Month, April is also Sexual Assault Awareness Month. Sexual Assault Awareness Month's emblem is a teal ribbon and aims to raise visibility about sexual assault and how it can be prevented." The movement started in the 1940s and 1950s during the civil rights era, challenging the status quo of keeping discussions of sexual assault private, and advocating for victims of sexual assault and/or domestic violence. With the fresh blooms of spring, advocates want to bring about a re-blooming of how we talk about sexual assault in our communities.

References

History of Sexual Assault Awareness Month - National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC). (2025, December 10). National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC). <https://www.nsvrc.org/history/>

Roth, K. (n.d.). Autism Acceptance Month. Autism Society. Retrieved March 25, 2026, from <https://autismsociety.org/autism-acceptance-month/>

Shannoncrowley. (2024, April 19). Autism Acceptance Month. Explore & More. <https://exploreandmore.org/autism-acceptance-month/>

Maya Roberson | TRIO Peer Mentor | International Studies

Movie Review—Harry Potter & The Goblet of Fire



Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire stands as one of the most captivating and transformative entries in the series, blending magical spectacle with the emotional weight of growing up. In this fourth installment, the wizarding world expands through the thrilling Triwizard Tournament, where Harry is unexpectedly thrust into a dangerous competition far beyond his years. From fire-breathing dragons to the haunting depths of the Black Lake, each challenge is visually stunning and filled with tension, keeping viewers completely immersed.

What truly sets this film apart, however, is its deeper emotional tone. Alongside the excitement, we see Harry and his friends navigating the complexities of adolescence—friendship struggles, jealousy, and the awkwardness of first romances, especially during the beautifully depicted Yule Ball. These moments add a layer of realism that makes the characters feel more human and relatable, even in a world filled with magic. As the story unfolds, the film takes a darker turn, signaling a shift in the series. The

sense of wonder is still present, but it is now accompanied by a growing feeling of danger and uncertainty. This balance between enchantment and intensity makes Goblet of Fire not just an entertaining fantasy film, but a powerful coming-of-age story. It leaves a lasting impression, reminding us that even in magical worlds, growing up is the greatest challenge of all.

Angel Lupian Alvarez | TRIO Peer Mentor | Accounting

Arab American Restaurants in Denver

Arab American Heritage Month was initiated by the Arab America Foundation in 2017, and April was formally recognized as Arab American Heritage Month in 2021. In honor of this month's intent to recognize the cultural impacts and Arab roots in America, the following is a small list of Arab and Middle Eastern inspired restaurant to eat in Denver:

Baghdad Restaurant

- ◆ Family, Mediterranean, Middle Eastern, Iraqi Cuisine
- ◆ Address: 2410 S Colorado Blvd., Denver, CO 80222
- ◆ Website: <https://baghdadrestaurant.top>



Yemen Grill

- ◆ Family, Mediterranean, Middle eastern, Yemeni Cuisine
- ◆ Address One: 2353 South Havana Street, UnitD#15A Aurora, CO 80014
- ◆ Address Two: 1135 E Evans Ave Unit 103, Denver, CO 80210
- ◆ Website: <https://www.yemengrilldenver.com>



Dijlah Restaurant

- ◆ Mediterranean and Iraqi Arab Restaurant
- ◆ Address: 10021 E Hampden Ave, Denver, CO 80231

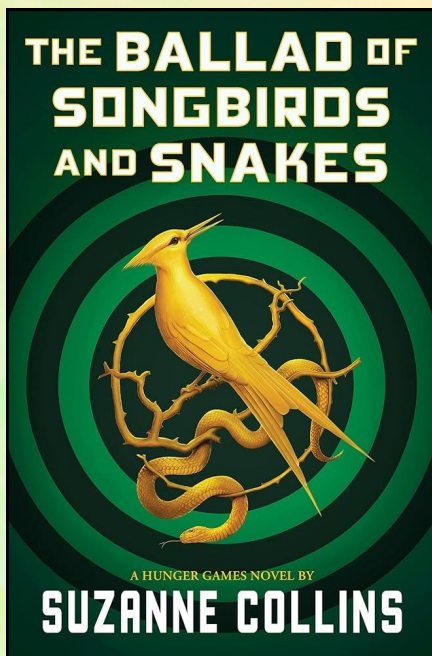
Reem's Bakery - Middle Eastern Syrian Sweets

- ◆ Levant and Moroccan Deserts
- ◆ Address: 2418 S Colorado Blvd, Denver, CO 80222
- ◆ Website: <https://www.reemsmiddleeasternbakery.com>



Zinah Ghafoori | TRIO Office Assistant | Engineering

Book Review—The Hunger Games



The Hunger Games series by Suzanne Collins is extremely nostalgic for many of us, as most of us were assigned to read the first book in middle school. For a while there were only 3 books in the series, following Katniss and Peeta in their journey of surviving and destroying the Hunger Games. However, in more recent times, there is now an additional 2 books which follows 2 more important characters- Haymitch and President Snow. Between all 5 books, I believe that The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes is the best as it tells the story of how President Snow was originally a coach in the 10th Annual Hunger Games. The story follows a teenage Snow, coaching a teen girl and "falling in love" with her. Despite the obvious theme of a forbidden "romance", you get to see how the Hunger Games had evolved all those years before Katniss and Peeta even entered the arena. Seeing President Snow as a semi-innocent teen before falling into corruption is definitely my favorite part about this book. If you liked the original trilogy, you MUST read this book (as well as Haymitch's book, but I digress).



Reyna Anaya | TRIO Peer Mentor | Sociology

PODCAST

Recommendations

LOOKING FOR A FUN PODCAST FULL OF TEA AND CHISME?

PRETTY NOT SMART

Pretty not Smart, a podcast hosted by the prettiest sibling duo, Louie and Yoatzi Castro. Tune in every week as they share all the CHISME on what really happens in their everyday lives. Juicy conversations and everything in between!



ROTTEN MANGO

Are you into true crime and spooking stories? Rotten Mango, hosted by Stephanie Soo, loves doing deep dives into the darkest crimes without leaving any details out. If you're interested in the storytelling of crimes and stories from around the world, this is the place for you!

CALL HER DADDY

Into honest discussion and the latest topics? Call Her Daddy, hosted by Alex Cooper, focuses on honest discussions with special guests. Bold topics and laugh-out-loud moments, recent TEA and much more!



TWO HOT TAKES

Want to hear some crazy stories? Join host Morgan Absher and her team of cohorts as they scavenge Reddit stories. Tune in for the juiciest dating, relationship, life and AITA stories.

Laisha Ortega Jaquez | TRIO Peer Mentor | Biology



Ethnic Studies Summer and Fall Courses

Summer '26 Ethnic Studies Courses

SOTHARY CHEA

ETST 3272 - GLOBAL MEDIA

ETST 3704 - CULTURE, RACISM, AND ALIENATION

JUNIOR REINA

ETST 3110 - INDIGENOUS STUDIES (OL)

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Ethnic Studies
COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS AND SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO DENVER

Fall '26 Ethnic Studies Courses

ETST 2024 - FIND YOUR VOICE, CHANGE THE WORD ETST 4000/5000 - RESEARCH METHODS	KATHERINE MOHRMAN 	ETST 1111 - FIRST YEAR SEMINAR	SOTHARY CHEA 
ETST 2357 - ASIAN AMERICAN PACIFIC ISLANDER CULTURES	JIHEE YOON 	ETST 3108 - CHICANA/O & LATINA/O HISTORY ETST 3278 - LATINA NARRATIVES	ELIZABETH GARCIA 
ETST 2000 - INTRO TO ETHNIC STUDIES ETST 2155 - AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES ETST 3230 - AFRICAN AMERICAN FAMILY ETST 3704 - CULTURE, RACISM AND ALIENATION	DENNIS GREEN 	ETST 2000 - INTRO TO ETHNIC STUDIES ETST 3297 - SOCIAL HISTORY OF ASIAN AMERICANS	CHAD SHOMURA 
ETST 3003 - FROM BUDDHA TO #BLACKLIVESMATTER	STEVEN VOSE 	ETST 3350 - COLONIAL LATIN AMERICA	RYAN CREWE 
ETST 3036 - AMERICAN INDIAN CULTURAL IMAGES ETST 3110 - INDIGENOUS STUDIES	JUNIOR REINA 	ETST 3111 - ETHNICITY AND RACE IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN CULTURE ETST 3272 - GLOBAL MEDIA	GABRIEL NELSON 

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Ethnic Studies
COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS AND SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO DENVER

Interested in Ethnic Studies courses?

Check out the upcoming summer and fall 2026 courses!

[INSTAGRAM](#)

[FACEBOOK](#)

April Workshop Calendar

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI
		1 How to RaCAS: Everything you Need to Know 1:00 pm—2:00 pm In-Person—Lynx Connect & Zoom 	2 De-Stress with Art: Art Journaling  2:00 pm—3:00 pm In-Person—ACAD 2000 — Presentation Creation 101: Designing Posters & Slides  2:30 pm—4:00 pm In-Person—Lynx Connect	3 
6	7 Study Buddy:  Using AI as a Study Tool 11:30 am—12:15 pm In-Person—Learning Lab 2230	8 Good Vibes - Wellness & Stress Management 11:00 am—11:45 pm Zoom  — Oral Talks 2:00 pm—3:30 pm In-Person—Lynx Connect & Zoom 	9	10 Managing Academic and Life Stress! 11:00 am—12:00 pm Zoom 
13 What's Your Learning Style?  2:00 pm—3:00 pm In-Person—ACAD 2000	14 Good Vibes: Wellness & Stress Management  11:30 am—12:15 pm In-Person—Learning Lab 2230	15 Level Up! Final Exam Prep 11:00 am—11:45 pm Zoom  — Pitch Perfect: Sharing Your Projects with Confidence 2:00 pm—3:30 pm In-Person—Lynx Connect & Zoom 	16 Motivation and Goal Setting  11:00 am—12:00 pm In-Person—ACAD 2000	17 strive for progress not perfection
20 Procrastination: Now or Later?  12:00 pm—1:00 pm In-Person—ACAD 2000	21 Level Up! Final Exam Prep  11:30 am—12:15 pm In-Person—Learning Lab 2230 — Getting Ahead on Student Loan Repayment 4:00 pm—5:00 pm Zoom 	22 Job Search Basics  4:00 pm—5:00 pm In-Person—ACAD 2000	23	24 
27	28 Resume Basics  2:00 pm—3:00 pm In-Person—ACAD 2000	29	30 Graduate School Preparation  11:00 am—12:00 pm In-Person—ACAD 2000	

Legend for In-person, Zoom, and Hybrid Sessions.

HYBRID 

IN-PERSON 

ZOOM 

Make sure to complete the TRIO SSS Online Evaluation Form for Skill Building Workshops and Financial Literacy Sessions.
Complete at: <https://forms.office.com/r/GA6Hbnk4K>.

REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED FOR ALL WORKSHOPS, PLEASE REGISTER VIA LINKS BELOW

- ✓ [Learning Resources Center Workshops Registration](#)
- ✓ [TRIO SSS Skill Building Workshops Registration](#)
- ✓ [Undergraduate Research & Creative Activities](#)
- ✓ [Wellness Center Financial Wellness Workshop Registration](#)

TAKE A
SMALL STEP
EVERYDAY

