



THE PILLAR

A MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE TRIO SSS COMMUNITY
"Helping Students Realize Their Full Potential"



MAY 2024
ISSUE

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Mission Statement

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

TRIO EXPLORER—AMY MARTINEZ

The TRIO Student Support Services program is happy to highlight Amy Martinez's study abroad experience in San Jose, Costa Rica. Amy is working to complete her B.A. in Criminal Justice: Victim and Victim Services, with two minors in Psychology and Spanish.



When asked about her experience, Amy stated "My time abroad was truly life-changing. What struck me most was how everyone in the country was so committed to protecting the environment and how welcoming they all were." Amy was able to explore the beautiful country of Costa Rica with thrilling adventures. She stated "Zip-lining through the rainforest and rafting in the Sarapiquí River were unforgettable experiences that left a lasting impression. The thrill of soaring through the treetops on a zip-line, and rafting amidst the serene beauty of nature, helped me conquer my fears and step out of my comfort zone."



Amy explored the Caribbean side of Costa Rica during spring break, having the opportunity to go horseback riding on the beach and through the forest. She was able to visit places outside of Costa Rica like San Blas and Panama, and thought it was incredible to see so many sloths while abroad! Amy is proud to have crossed this experience off her bucket list. Beyond these adventures, she made lifelong friends and cherished moments with my host family, sharing meals and laughter together. Overall, Amy said her experience was filled with warmth, growth, and unforgettable memories.

The experience in Costa Rica for Amy was more than an academic journey, she stated "It was an incredible experience that taught me how a presented opportunity could allow me to grow and learn more about myself." Amy learned so much while abroad in Costa Rica. While reflecting on her journey, Amy realized the biggest lesson she took away from this experience was to take a significant risk in her education and step out of her comfort zone. **CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE...**

TRIO EXPLORER CONTINUED

Amy stated “Arriving in Costa Rica, I never expected to realize that what I needed was time away, the laid-back lifestyle of “Pura Vida” fostered a mindset of gratitude and immense happiness. My experience truly opened my mind to cherish life’s simple pleasures, whether laughing with friends on campus or enjoying a cold drink on the beach, listening to waves crashing and monkeys howling. I discovered that sometimes, the greatest adventures begin with a step away from the familiar and found the perspective I had been seeking.”

Amy would encourage other TRIO SSS Participants to study abroad. She stated, “As a TRIO SSS participant, I can attest that studying abroad is about opening doors to personal and academic growth, it may be scary but taking those risks allows you to immerse yourself in a new environment.” She first emphasizes the academic advantages, with access to unique courses that earn credit in your degree program while engaging with diverse learning environments. Next, Amy wants to highlight the professional benefits such as enhancing of cross-cultural communication skills, global awareness, and competitiveness in the job market.

Amy would address financial concerns by providing information on available scholarships, grants, and funding options specifically tailored for TRIO SSS participants. She speaks on the personal growth aspect and emphasizes “how studying abroad fosters independence, resilience, and adaptability while broadening perspectives and nurturing a lifelong passion for learning.” Amy’s last bit of encouragement is offering guidance and support, outlining the steps involved in the application process, navigating academic requirements, and addressing any logistical challenges that may arise.

Overall, by presenting a comprehensive overview of the academic, professional, and personal benefits, along with practical support mechanisms, TRIO SSS participants can be empowered to explore and pursue the opportunities offered by studying abroad.

While abroad, Amy still faced challenges. She mentioned times when she felt homesick and would think the whole idea of studying abroad was not like she imagined. The first three weeks were an adjustment period, even though she knows the language and is fluent in Spanish, she stated “I still felt as if I was missing a piece of myself.” Both Amy and her roommates experienced homesickness around the same time, managing to help each other get through it by going out to brunch or eating some gelato. Amy expressed “Overall, there are lows and highs to studying abroad, but never be afraid to go out of your comfort zone and experience something new like this! No matter what program you choose, there are amazing people there to help you throughout your experience to make you feel at home.”

If you are interested in studying abroad, please visit with an advisor from the CU Denver Office of Global Education/Study Abroad! You can visit their website [here](#). Click “Make An Appointment” to schedule your first-time appointment.



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT — MICHELLE “MICHY” RAMIREZ



The TRIO Student Support Services program is happy to spotlight Michelle “Michy” M. Ramirez in this month’s edition of *“The Pillar”* newsletter. She will be graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree in Construction Management with a minor in Business Fundamentals. She has been an active member of the program since fall 2019.

When asked what her experience was like in college Michelle shared overall it has been a challenge as she had to navigate early in her studies how to transition to remote learning because COVID-19 hit after only being in school for a semester and a half.

She was fortunate enough to have a place where she could attend her classes without interruption since during this time she lived with her parents. When she started at CU Denver, she was taking classes in Biology and was on the pre-veterinary track. Michelle shared that she has always had a passion for animals so at the time this seemed like the right major for her. After realizing that Biology was not for her, she started taking Civil Engineering courses and once again found that this major was not for her. At this point, she was in her second year getting ready for her third year and came across the Construction Management Program where she found her passion in how a team of people can come together to create and be a part of something.

Michelle noted that it was difficult for her to be involved in extracurricular activities during COVID-19 and even after coming back to campus. As her college journey continued, she decided to push herself out of her comfort zone to explore what she could do. About two years ago, she was asked to be a student facilitator for the Body Project workshop that focused on promoting body positivity, breaking unrealistic beauty standards, and where she found other like minded people. In addition, she was also given the opportunity to become the Center for Identity and Inclusion’s Newsletter Manager. She took the opportunity, and she is glad she was given the chance to improve herself, especially after struggling to recover from tough COVID-19 times.



Michelle was asked about the biggest challenge she faced while earning her degree. She stated, “It was difficult to see other classmates that I had started college with graduate before me. But I strived to keep pushing myself and focus on my own personal achievements. In addition, being one of the few women in my college courses was also a challenge. It gave me imposter syndrome and at one point I did not want to continue in my degree because of this.” She is glad that she stuck it out because she has found and created great relationships in her program.

Her favorite memory in college was when her fiancé surprised her with her first Guinea Pig. Michelle was finishing up her third year of college and her partner who was studying at MSU Denver surprised her while she was working at school. He came in with a cardboard box labeled with the PetSmart’s logo, she opened the box and there was a guinea pig. She stated, “We named him Mogwai (yes, from the Christmas horror movie Gremlins) and later that same day went back to purchase him a buddy who we named Turbo. Two months later we rescued Russell from the Dumb Friends League. A few months later, we rescued three more piggies named Gus, Cosmo, and Pumpkin!”

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE....

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT CONTINUED



One thing she wished she was told when she started college was to be involved in more clubs and organizations or to attend events that are outside of classes that can help you distress. Michelle noted to not forget to reward yourself when you accomplish things. Celebrate your hard work, both small and big things. She stated, "Everyone has their own journey! It took me five years to complete my college degree and there is nothing wrong with that. Some people take less, and others take more, which is more than okay."

When asked about how TRIO has helped her, she stated "TRIO has helped me navigate through hard times where I was unsure of what I wanted from college. Henry has always been super supportive and is a great listener. I would urge you to ask what resources are available at TRIO and take advantage of them!" Michelle also mentions not to forget to check out the Center for Identity and Inclusion (CII) where you will find your home away from home and a microwave for your food!

Her short-term goal is to become a book girly! She used to love reading when she was younger, and she would like to get back into reading and make that a hobby. Michelle noted that if she read enough, she would gift herself a kobo or a kindle. In addition, she would like to redecorate her home to match a Pastel Danish home. Michelle's long-term goal is to purchase an SUV or small truck. Amenities for her future vehicle would include seat heaters and remote start, which are needed living in Colorado. Additionally, she would like to purchase a second home with her fiancé so that her little dog Lucy can run around the yard. Michelle noted that she would like to enroll in a Graduate School program to earn a master's degree in Women and Gender Studies or a similar degree. She will be starting a professional position at Kraemer North America in the summer and would like to move up in positions and create an inclusive space where all feel welcome.

Her hobbies and interests include going on walks in the park, arts and crafts, puzzles, and listening to new music. Recently, Michelle has loved going to her local library. She also loves watching horror movies and cutting her dog's hair. If she won a million dollars, the first thing she would do is invest that money. Since her fiancé works in Finance, she would seek his help as well. Secondly, she would have a nice dinner, pay off her mortgage, buy a new car, help her fiancé pay off his truck, and help her parents retire immediately. Lastly, Michelle would make a 3-month itinerary to travel the world with her fiancé and her dog Lucy. Her favorite quote is "If you believe in yourself, everyone around you will too" by Claudia Soto Urrutia. We wish her continued success in her personal and career endeavors. YOU DID IT!

TRIO KUDOS—LET US KNOW ABOUT YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS!

kudos

Have an accomplishment? Please tell TRIO about it.
You can stop by the TRIO Office located in the
Student Commons Building, Suite 2011
to share your News and Kudos.

CAMPUS RESOURCE HIGHLIGHT—COUNSELING CENTER



Happy May! Did you know that May is National Mental Health Awareness Month? One way to take care of your mental well-being is to try counseling and therapy.

Counseling can be a great way to talk problems out, steer through feelings, navigate thought patterns, and increase self-reflection and awareness. The CU Denver Student and Community Counseling Center offers mental health services to students. All enrolled, fee-paying CU Denver students can have an initial intake and 10 individual sessions within a year.

In order to make your first counseling appointment, you need to complete an intake form so the professionals can get to know you better; therefore, they can refer you to something specific that is better suited for you or appoint you to a clinician. These 10 sessions are around 50 minutes long, available at no cost to students, and can be remote or in person. In addition to individual sessions, the CU Denver Student and Community Counseling Center also offers therapy groups, workshops, crisis services, and couple and family therapy. If you are a student in need of long-term specialized services, you can contact their office for referrals in the Denver Metro area.

To learn more, call 303-315-7270, visit the Counseling Center in person at the Tivoli Student Union at 900 Auraria Parkway #454 Denver, CO 80204, or explore their website: <https://www.ucdenver.edu/counseling-center>.



Zinah Ghafoori | TRIO SSS Office Assistant

MEET OUR NEW OFFICE ASSISTANT



Hi everyone!

My name is Lahari Vallamkonda, and I am a new Office Assistant for the TRIO SSS program. I am currently a freshman majoring in Biology. With my major, I hope to go to dental school and become a dentist specializing in periodontics. I want to be a dentist because you get to help people achieve a healthy smile and it gets you working with your hands, which are both things I personally love doing! Your oral health can be directly correlated to your body's health, which is why dentistry is such an important profession. I hope to make an impact in Colorado and hopefully help underserved communities with their oral health.

One quote that resonates with me is "You miss 100% of the shots you don't take." I love this quote because it motivates me to push myself out of my comfort zone and helps me pursue opportunities I never imagined going for. When I'm outside of school, I love drawing, listening to music, and hanging out with my friends in my free time. I'm excited to be a new addition to the TRIO staff!

Lahari Vallamkonda | TRIO SSS Office Assistant

RECIPE—STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKE

Strawberry Shortcake Recipe

Enjoy a tasty homemade treat! Summer is the perfect season for strawberries and strawberry shortcake is a classic recipe that has been around for centuries. The first documented strawberry shortcake recipe appeared in a 1588 British cookbook and became a popular treat starting in the 1600s.



Ingredients for Strawberry Shortcake

- 1 ½ pounds of strawberries, stemmed and quartered
- 5 tablespoons of sugar
- 2 cups of all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons of baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon of baking soda
- ¾ teaspoon of salt
- 1 ½ cups heavy cream

Ingredients for Whipped Cream

- 1 ½ cups of heavy cream, chilled
- 3 tablespoons of sugar
- 1 ½ teaspoons of vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon freshly grated lemon zest

Directions for Strawberry Shortcake

1. Mix strawberries with 3 tablespoons of sugar and refrigerate while juices develop, for at least 30 minutes.
2. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F.
3. Sift together the flour, baking powder, baking soda, the remaining 2 tablespoons of sugar, and salt in a medium bowl. Add heavy cream and mix until just combined (not fully mixed, may look like a chunky textured mix). Place mixture in an ungreased 8-inch square pan and bake until golden; 18 to 20 minutes.
4. Remove shortcake from the pan and place on a rack to cool slightly. Cut into 6 pieces and slit each piece in half horizontally
5. Spoon some of the strawberries with their juice onto each shortcake bottom. Top with some whipped cream and then add a shortcake top. Spoon more strawberries over the top and serve.

Directions for Whipped Cream:

1. Using a mixer, beat the heavy cream, sugar vanilla, and lemon zest until soft peaks form; about 1 ½ to 2 minutes.

Check out the Food Network website for more: <https://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/strawberry-shortcake-recipe3-1938695>

Anahi Andres | TRIO SSS Peer Mentor

TV SHOW REVIEW—THE OFFICE

The Office



"The Office" is a timeless sitcom that has captivated audiences worldwide with its unique blend of humor, heart, and mockumentary-style storytelling. Set in the mundane yet endlessly entertaining environment of the Dunder Mifflin paper company, the show follows the daily lives and interactions of its quirky employees, led by the hilariously inept regional manager Michael Scott, played brilliantly by Steve Carell. The series masterfully balances laugh-out-loud comedy with moments of genuine emotion, creating a rich tapestry of characters that viewers can't help but root for and relate to.

One of the show's greatest strengths lies in its exceptional ensemble cast, each member bringing their own distinct personality and comedic flair to the table. From the sarcastic wit of Jim Halpert (John Krasinski) to the eccentric antics of Dwight Schrute (Rainn

Wilson), every character is fleshed out with depth and nuance, making for endlessly entertaining dynamics and memorable moments. Moreover, "The Office" expertly satirizes corporate culture and office politics, offering sharp social commentary while never losing sight of its comedic core.

At its heart, "The Office" is not just about the daily grind of office life; it's about the relationships that form within that environment and the moments of connection and camaraderie that arise amidst the chaos. Through its nine-season run, the series navigates themes of friendship, love, ambition, and personal growth, culminating in a satisfying conclusion that brings closure to its beloved characters while leaving a lasting impact on its audience. With its clever writing, stellar performances, and enduring charm, "The Office" continues to stand as a timeless classic in the world of television comedy.

Angel Lupian | TRIO SSS Office Assistant

MOVIE REVIEW—DUNE PART 2

Having hit theaters on March 1st, "Dune: Part 2" continues the epic saga set forth by its predecessor with even greater ambition and scale. Building upon the foundation laid in the first installment, Director Denis Villeneuve effortlessly, realizes Frank Herbert's universe, delving deeper into the complex characters and political machinations of the book. Timothée Chalamet's portrayal of Paul Atreides evolves as he navigates the treacherous landscape of Arrakis, facing both external enemies and internal struggles with his newfound power as the Kwisatz Haderach.



The visuals and sound remain awe-inspiring, transporting audiences to a distant world and immersing them in the rich landscape of the Dune universe. The action sequences are pulse-pounding and leave viewers hanging on the edge of their seats.

"Dune: Part 2" not only lives up to its predecessor but surpasses it in many respects, solidifying its place as one of the greatest science fiction epics of our time. With its blend of spectacle, substance, and sheer storytelling prowess, this film is a must-see for fans of the genre and newcomers alike.

Mirakle Wright | TRIO SSS Peer Mentor

PLACES TO EAT AROUND DENVER

Check out these cool, unique places to eat in Denver!

Little Man Ice Cream

This philanthropic ice cream shop donates a scoop of rice or beans to a community in need for every scoop of ice cream they serve. Characterized by their 28-foot-tall, 14,000-pound milk can-shaped building, they serve unique flavors of fresh homemade ice cream every day to the citizens of Denver until midnight.

Little Man Ice Cream is located at 2620 16th St. Denver, CO 80218
Check out their website for more info: littlemanicecream.com



Voodoo Doughnut

A place that serves unique and outlandish donuts. Here, you can try donuts like the Bacon Maple Bar or bite into the Mango Tango donut, a donut filled with mango jelly! They also have vegan-friendly donuts. The restaurant also doubles as a wedding chapel and performs weddings like the original location in Portland, Oregon!

Voodoo Donuts is located at 1520 East Colfax Ave. Denver, CO 80218
Check out their website for more info: voodoodoughnut.com



Root Down

A small, high-energy restaurant located in a converted gas station. The amount of eclectic dishes coupled with the unique location contributes to an unforgettable dining experience. There are also tons of options for vegetarians!

Root Down is located at 1600 W 33rd Ave. Denver, CO 80211
Check out their website for more info: ediblebeats.com/root-down



Lahari Vallamkonda | TRIO SSS Office Assistant

MAY WORKSHOP CALENDAR

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
<p>Make sure to complete the TRIO SSS Online Evaluation Form for Skill Building Workshops and Financial Literacy Sessions. https://forms.office.com/r/hZWNYBUGdf</p>		<p>1</p> <p>¹Investing 201: Retirement Planning 10:00 am—11:00 am Wellness Center Seminar Room</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>3</p>
<p>6</p> <p>²Wellness: Find Balance and Build Resiliency 2:00 pm—3:00 pm ZOOM</p>	<p>7</p> <p>²Procrastination: Now or Later? 12:00 pm—1:00 pm ZOOM</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; background-color: #ffc107; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> <input type="radio"/> LATER <input checked="" type="radio"/> NOW </div>	<p>8</p> <p>²Resume Basics 2:00 pm—3:00 pm SC, Suite 2000</p>	<p>9</p> <p>²Coping w/Stress Using Art: Painting 11:00 am—12:15 pm SC, Suite 2000</p> 	<p>10</p>

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

HYBRID

IN-PERSON

ZOOM

REGISTRATION REQUIRED—Non-TRIO workshops are subject to change.

¹Wellness & Recreation Services Financial Wellness Workshops: [Registration Required: RSVP: HERE](#)

²TRIO SSS Skill Building Workshops: [Registration Required: RSVP: HERE](#)

GRADUATE SCHOOL BOOT CAMP TRAVEL OPPORTUNITY TO SAN ANTONIO

Hello TRIO Participants!

We hope you are getting ready for finals week! We want to let you all know of an amazing opportunity! We are able to provide this great experience and take you to a **Graduate School Boot Camp in San Antonio Texas this May 21-23!** This is a great opportunity if you are interested in attending graduate school and need help on where to begin when it comes to the process of applying to graduate school! Expenses for this opportunity are all covered by us! Click on this link to find more information! [McNair Scholars Program | Office of Undergraduate Research | UTSA | University of Texas at San Antonio](#)

This grad school boot camp is for both SSS and McNair students so don't let the name of it discourage you from applying. We do have a quick turnaround and need to know if you are interested and can commit to this opportunity. Please fill out this form by **Monday, May 6th 5:00 pm** to be considered. Please answer all questions!

Form: <https://forms.office.com/r/mzFT2maK11>

If you have any questions, please reach out to Rafael at rafael.orozco@ucdenver.edu