



THE PILLAR



A MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE TRIO SSS COMMUNITY

"Helping students realize their full potential."

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Henry Ornelas | SSS Project Manager

Student Spotlight: Celebrating SSS Spring 2026 Graduates: Liliya Gokh & Caryssa Shinozawa



Pictured Above: Spring 2026 Graduates Liliya Gokh (left) and Caryssa Shinozawa (right).

Liliya Gokh - Major: Biology

The TRIO Student Support Services program is happy to spotlight Liliya Gokh in this month’s newsletter. She will be graduating with a major in Biology and a minor in Psychology. Her favorite quote is, “We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit” by Will Durant. This quote resonates with her because it is a reminder that success is not about one big moment but instead built through consistency every single day. Her college experience was amazing. It has been filled with a lot of studying but she would not trade it for anything. Pushing through challenging coursework has really prepared her for what’s ahead in graduate school.

When asked how the TRIO Program has helped her, she noted, “TRIO has been a great resource, especially through their financial literacy sessions. Learning about budgeting and even investing are things nobody really teaches you and having that knowledge has made me feel more prepared for life beyond college.”



Henry Ornelas | SSS Project Manager

Student Spotlight (*Continued...*)

Liliya Gokh – Major: Biology

Her advice to other participants is to take full advantage of everything the TRIO program offers. When asked what her biggest challenge in earning her degree was, she noted, “Honestly, time management has been my biggest challenge. Balancing classes while also keeping up with volunteering and extracurriculars was not always easy but learning how to prioritize and stay organized has been one of the most valuable lessons college has taught me.

Her favorite memories in college include attending all the campus events during her freshman year and meeting so many new people. She mentioned everyone was new, everyone was open, and it was easy to just connect with people. When asked about one thing she wished she was told when she started college Liliya stated, “Go to office hours and do not be afraid to ask for help. I wish someone had drilled that into me from day one. She shares that taking advantage of that time makes a real difference and can help you get to know your professors a little better.

Her long-term goal is to be accepted into Physician Assistant (PA) School. It is something she has been working towards for a while. She is excited to finally apply. Within the next year, Liliya’s main goal is to gain patient care hours. It is a critical step towards PA School. Her hobbies and interests include reading, painting, and hiking. These are some of her favorite ways to unwind. Liliya believes that it is important to balance schoolwork with hobbies and to make time for self-care. She noted, “College can get overwhelming, and having those outlets keeps you grounded and healthy both mentally and academically.” When asked if she won a million dollars, what she would do first she mentioned that she would invest it. She has learned enough about financial literacy to know that a million dollars is an opportunity, not just a shopping spree. The TRIO program wishes Liliya continued success in her academic and personal goals.



Caryssa Shinozawa – Major: Recording Arts

The TRIO Student Support Services program is happy to also spotlight Caryssa Shinozawa who will be graduating this semester. She is a Recording Arts major through the College of Arts and Media. Her favorite quote is, “Remember why you started.” She noted that this quote is from one of her professors who shared it with her. She mentioned that we all start from somewhere and while there may be times when she stumbled, this quote reminded her that she started on this path for a reason.

When asked about what her college experience was like she said, “College, for me, has been a wild ride, it has had its difficulties, but I had a lot of fun here at CU Denver. Originally, I was not planning to attend here, but I am so glad I did because I was able to make so many wonderful memories and get life-changing experiences.” Caryssa noted that she has had the opportunity to meet lifelong friends, develop strong interpersonal skills from her job as a Resident Assistant to honing her technical skills and knowledge as an Audio Engineer. Every person she has met and every action she has done has helped her to become the person she is today. Caryssa’s biggest challenge in school was overcoming the fear of networking with people. This is something she had to learn and start doing very quickly to get to know people and have them get to know her. This can make an impact on where your career can go. She considers herself an introvert so talking and upholding relationships was difficult in the beginning, but she pushed herself to try and reach out to...

Henry Ornelas | SSS Project Manager

Student Spotlight (*Continued...*)

Caryssa Shinozawa – Major: Recording Arts

...others and make meaningful relationships with others. It is something she continues to work on but understands that a brief conversation can open so many different doors for you.

It was hard for Caryssa to pick one favorite moment in college, but she noted it was the times she got to work in the studio. She loved every moment from the good and bad. Working in the studio helped her reaffirm her goals and ambitions of working in audio and it helped push her to work harder to make her audio engineering career happen. From working in the different studios, she got to learn how to use them and was able to hone her workflow. It also allowed her to adapt to the changes of each studio, becoming versed in both the console, and the gear. It was an amazing time to get firsthand experience.



When asked how the TRIO Program has helped her, she stated, "As a first-generation college student, sometimes it was difficult for me to navigate my way through college, but the TRIO program and everyone on the team has made such a wonderful impact on my life. Through this program, I have been able to not only engage and make friends with other first-generation students but also have gotten the chance to attend workshops that have helped me on managing my work life balance as well as financial literacy." She noted that TRIO offered useful resources and the team behind it both professional staff and peer mentors all really cared for each person. Her advice for other students is to take advantage of the

resources you have access to. She also recommends building relationships with other students in the program along with program staff. She stated, "Everyone you meet, and everything that you learn can impact your life, be the person to take charge and be active in the TRIO community!"

Caryssa's short-term goal (within the year) is to secure an internship at a recording studio back home in Hawaii. She would also like to strengthen her credits and portfolio by working on more personal projects and doing some collaborative audio work. As she completes more collaborative projects, she hopes to build up her network as well as her professional presence to promote her services as a freelance audio engineer. Her long-term career goal is to be employed at a recording studio. If given the opportunity, she would love to build her own studio that would provide a multitude of different audio services. As a personal goal, she would love to travel more. Colorado was the first ever state she has been to and she would like to see the world. While traveling she would have the opportunity to share her work, make valuable connections with others, and build her clientele.

Caryssa noted that she has a vast number of hobbies and interests but one of her main interests that influenced her to step into the world of audio was singing. She took vocal lessons from the age of five and loved to perform whether it was karaoke or singing at local events/venues. In addition to singing, she also loves drawing, crocheting, and doing any type of craft. She also loves everything art related, so it really compliments her creative side. If she won a million dollars, the first thing she would do is invest in building her own studio since she would like to work in many different fields of audio to make a customized studio that has a quality set up and is something practical, she can work efficiently in. We wish her continued success! You did it!!!

TRIO Kudos!

We are happy to celebrate the following accomplishments from our TRIO Student Community!

- **Vika Sroymalai** is being recognized for peer leadership and community service awards!
- **Angel Lupian** has received a Community Impact Award from the FaM program!

Congratulations to these amazing students! Do you have an accomplishment you'd like to share with the TRIO SSS community? If so, please visit our office and write it on the TRIO Kudos board in our Computer Lab! You can also email us to include your accomplishments if you cannot make it to our office.



TRIO SSS Program Staff



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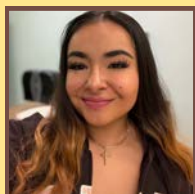
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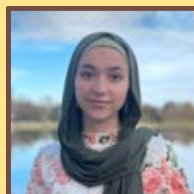
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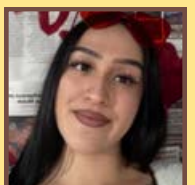
Zinah Ghafoori
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Angel Lupian Alvarez
TRIO SSS Peer Mentor
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Laisha Ortega Jaquez
TRIO SSS Peer Mentor
Major: Biology
Available Mon & Wed and
select Fridays
[Schedule with Laisha](#)



Natalie Ramirez
TRIO SSS Peer Mentor
Major: Biology
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Maya Roberson
TRIO SSS Peer Mentor
Major: International Studies
Available Tues & Thurs
[Schedule with Maya](#)

End of Semester Reminder!

As we close out the semester, please consider meeting with professional staff and student mentors to end strong! You also should be meeting with our staff to meet Book Scholarship requirements. Remember, Book Scholarship requirements are due May 15th. If you have been recently accepted to our program, please refer to your acceptance email for your Book Scholarship due dates.

Join the Honors Scholars Program (HSP)!



Pictured Above: Students celebrating the opening of the new University Honors & Leadership (UHL) office.

We encourage our eligible scholars to apply for the University Honors and Leadership's Honors Scholars Program (HSP). This 15-credit certificate program provides highly motivated students with unique learning experiences aimed to stimulate curiosity and critical thinking with flexible and personalized learning options. This program is meant to help you achieve your educational goals by developing your talents, providing opportunities to explore your passions, and feeding your intellectual curiosity.

To apply for the HSP program, you must meet the following criteria:

- Undergraduate degree-seeking student.
- Enrolled at CU Denver
- Have a cumulative GPA of 3.25 or higher

To apply for this program, click [HERE](#).

To visit the HSP website for more information, click [HERE](#).

Laisha Ortega Jaquez | SSS Peer Mentor

NEED TO BETTER YOUR STUDY SKILLS

WAYS TO STOP PROCRASTINATING

concentrate on your studies

TURN YOUR PHONE OFF

1



Put your phone away or switch it off completely until you are done with whatever you are studying.

BE ORGANIZED

Try to organize your work and create an order in which they need to be done.



2

CREATE A SCHEDULE

3

By creating a schedule, you are able to track what you are supposed to do and how long you have to do it.



TAKE BREAKS

Take a break to relax and take your mind off studying. Use this time to gather yourself and prepare for your next study session.



4

MOTIVATE YOURSELF

5

The best way to stay motivated is to think about what you're doing all this work for. What is the reason for all your hard work?



Maya Roberson | SSS Peer Mentor

May Awareness: Mental Health Awareness Month and AANHPI Heritage Month!

As we enter the last couple of weeks of the semester, we want to highlight two very important monthly awareness topics for May: Mental Health Awareness Month and AANHPI (Asian American, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander) Month!



Mental Health Awareness Month was first observed in the United States in 1949, dedicated to raising awareness and recognizing the role mental health plays in our overall wellbeing. Mental health has had a negative stigma tacked onto it, and the work of advocacy organizations this month is dedicated to removing that stigma and creating space for conversation about mental health. Educating others on mental health fosters an environment where people are better able to support each other and their loved ones that may be affected by a mental health condition. Staying informed and educating others on the importance of mental wellbeing is key! For students, be on the look-out for campus activities that will help you destress and relax as we are heading into finals!

This month is also recognized as AANHPI Month!



AANHPI stands for Asian American, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander. First recognized in 1977, AANHPI month was originally recognized only throughout the first week of May but, in 1990, was extended to

be recognized throughout the entire month of May. May commemorates the immigration of the first Japanese people to the United States on May 7, 1843, and marks the anniversary of the completion of the transcontinental railroad (of which most of the tracks were laid by Chinese immigrants) on May 10, 1869. This month, you will see many organizations on campus hosting events in honor of AANHPI month. We encourage you to go out and attend to show your support for your campus community!

Zinah Ghafoori | SSS Office Assistant

Resource Highlight: Student & Community Counseling Center



May is National Mental Health Awareness Month, and a way to care for your mental health is through counseling and therapy. The CU Denver Student and Community Counseling Center offers mental health services to students. They are located at Tivoli Student Union in room 454. Enrolled CU Denver Students can have an initial intake and 10 sessions in a year. These sessions are around 50 minutes long, available at no extra cost as they are already part of your fee, and can be remote or in person. They offer therapy groups, workshops, crisis services and couple and family therapy. If you need long term specialized service, contact their office for referrals in the Denver Metro area. For more information, call 303-315-7270, or visit their website at

<https://www.ucdenver.edu/counseling-center>

Remember to take care of your mental wellbeing, especially during finals week!

Reyna Anaya | SSS Peer Mentor

Crafts & Hobbies for the Summer

As we are near the end of the semester and the beginning of Summer, it is important to keep yourself busy to avoid wasting your time doomscrolling! I know that once I log into my Instagram or YouTube, I could spend up to hours consuming content that feels brain rotting and leaves me groggy. What I recommend doing to rid yourself of that bad habit is making crafts either by yourself or with friends! Here are some crafts that never fail to keep me busy.

Junk Journaling and Scrapbooking



A personalized book crafted from repurposed, or "junk" materials—such as old books, envelopes, magazines, and packaging— used to store memories, photos, and sketches.

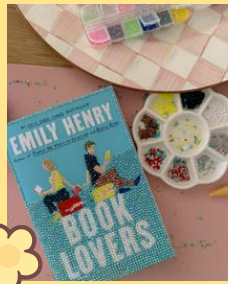
Altoid Wallets



Repurposing empty Altoids mint tins into small, customized storage containers for essentials like cash, cards, chapstick, and emergency items.

Bedazzling

A DIY craft that involves adhering small, flat-backed crystals, rhinestones, or gems to surfaces to add sparkle and flair. It is used to personalize accessories, clothing, and household items.



Lipstick Charms

Accessorize your lip balms/ glosses with beads and charms to add a personalized touch and even match with your friends.



Angel Lupian Alvarez | SSS Peer Mentor

Movie Review: Cars (2006)

Cars is a surprisingly heartfelt animated film that goes far beyond its surface as a racing movie. At first glance, it seems like a story centered on speed, competition, and flashy visuals, but it quickly reveals deeper themes about personal growth, humility, and the importance of community. The protagonist, Lightning McQueen, begins as a self-centered rookie obsessed with fame and winning. However, after an unexpected detour lands him in the quiet town of Radiator Springs, he is forced to slow down and reevaluate what truly matters.

What makes Cars stand out is how it balances humor and emotional depth. The supporting characters, like Mater, Doc Hudson, and Sally, each contribute to McQueen's transformation and represent values such as friendship, wisdom, and purpose. The film's message about not losing sight of life's simple joys in the pursuit of success feels especially meaningful, even for older audiences. Visually, the animation is vibrant and detailed, especially in its depiction of the desert landscapes and race sequences. Overall, Cars delivers more than just entertainment. It offers a thoughtful lesson about character and priorities. While it may not be the most complex Pixar film, its charm, memorable characters, and strong moral message make it a classic that resonates with viewers of all ages.



Natalie Ramirez | SSS Peer Mentor



Mango Overnight Oats

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup oats
- 1 tbsp chia seeds
- 1/2 cup almond milk or oat milk
- 1/3 cup non-fat Greek yogurt
- 1 or 2 tbsp of honey
- 1/4 cup mango
- extra: 1 scoop vanilla protein powder

Instructions

- In a medium-sized jar, mix all the ingredients.
- Cut the mango into diced slices and layer it on top of the mixed ingredients in the jar.
- Cover it up.
- Place it in the refrigerator to chill overnight.
- Can prepare multiple jars if you want to meal prep for the week.
- When you're ready to enjoy, simply stir the contents and dig in!

Other:

- You can use the same recipe and swap out the fruits of your choice.
- It aids digestion due to its high fiber content.



MAY 2026



MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
				1
4 Managing Academic & Life Stress 1:00 pm-2:00pm ZOOM	5	6 Motivation & Goal Setting 10:00am-11:00am ACAD 2000	7 Time Management Basics 12:00pm-1:00pm ACAD 2000	8
11 Wellness: Find Balance & Build Resiliency 11:00am-12:00pm ZOOM	12	13 Resume Basics 1:00pm-2:00pm ACAD 2000	14 Procrastination: Now or Later? 12:00pm-1:00pm ACAD 2000	15 BOOK SCHOLARSHIP DEADLINE! END OF THE SPRING SEMESTER!
18 Organization 10:00am-11:00pm ZOOM	19 Graduate School Basics 12:00pm-1:00pm ACAD 2000	20	21	22
25 CAMPUS CLOSED: MEMORIAL DAY	26 Job Search Basics 11:00am-12:00pm ACAD 2000	27	28	29 Facing Imposter Syndrome with a Growth Mindset 10:00 am-11:00am ZOOM

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



In-Person



Hybrid



Zoom

[Learning Resources Center Workshops Registration](#)

[TRIO SSS Skill Building Workshops Registration](#)

[Undergraduate Research & Creative Activities](#)

[Wellness Center Financial Wellness Workshop Registration](#)