



THE ADVOCATE

THE OFFICE OF MINORITY STUDENT AFFAIRS' NEWSLETTER

YOUR CONNECTION TO THE OMSA

The Office of Minority Student Affairs provides exceptional support services that enhance the academic achievement, personal development, and graduation rates of first generation, low-income, and historically underrepresented students at Illinois.

The Advocate, our semesterly newsletter, allows you to stay connected to the OMSA and discover the outstanding successes of our students!

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WELCOME



GREETING SCHOLARS, PARTNERS, FAMILIES AND FRIENDS!

As the Spring 2023 terms ends, I am pleased to share with you that the University of Illinois Urbana Champaign has been designated a First Scholars Institution by The Center for First-Generation Student Success an initiative of NASPA – Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA)! We are the first institution in the state of Illinois to earn this distinction.



Equally exhilarating is that the campus has asked Assistant Vice Chancellor for Student Success, Inclusion and Belonging, Domonic Cobb along with the Office of Minority Student Affairs to lead the efforts once again towards acknowledging and elevating Illinois' first-generation movement. The OMSA's participation in these gallant efforts are no surprise, after all, the 1964 Economic Opportunities Act of 1964 and then later the Higher Education Act of 1965 are the cornerstones of our TRIO programs and was the first time the term first-generation was used to galvanize and recognize the collect talents of a single group as well as to establish and to codify strategies, practices, services, and structures to promote student success. In keeping with these founding principles, TRIO, Advising and Mentoring and Tutoring and Academic Services have all longed leaned into intrusive, developmental, and prescriptive advising and coaching models, early interventions, and performance-based metrics.

So, friends, you can see why we are so excited to be a part of this renewed commitment to supporting first-generation scholars. It is simply electrifying! In the weeks, months, and semesters ahead we will work with a variety of thought partners and build coalitions to advocate and communicate the stories of our first-generation pioneers! In the end and in keeping with the campus' Student Success Initiative, we will be working to generate, promote and implement unified student-centered organizational structures and approaches with a goal towards increasing first-generation student success. I hope you will join the OMSA in saying, Way to go Illinois!

We will be sure to keep you updated about our progress!

Continued Success,
Kimberly J. Alexander-Brown
Interim Director

NEWS BITES

In this section, catch up on quick highlights and updates from all across the OMSA! Have an update to share? Reach out to us at: omsasocial@illinois.edu!



MCKINLEY HEALTH SPECIAL POPULATIONS PROGRAM

The OMSA was thrilled to continue the tradition of sharing our services and resources at the 28th Annual Health Fair hosted by the McKinley Special Populations Program: Spring Into a Healthier You. A special thank you to all of the students who stopped by to complete their resource scavenger hunt!

TRIO STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES 2023 RECOGNITION DINNER

TRIO SSS was delighted to be able to celebrate our students' successes. SSS recognized all the hard work, dedication, and perseverance of all of their students, but were especially delighted to acknowledge our SSS seniors who are on the cusp of a significant milestone - attaining their bachelor's degree. We all join in celebrating this significant milestone in your lives!



Photo of Robert Walker, one of many TRIO SSS seniors honored at this event. Please see a group photo from this event at the end of our newsletter.

NEWS BITES

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TRIO SSS STUDENT PARTICIPATES IN 2023 COMMUNITY ACADEMIC SCHOLARS PROGRAM

Photo and information come from the Community-Academic Scholars website



Kiara Balleza (she/they) is a senior majoring in Geography and Geographic Information Science and minoring in Public Health. She plans to become a nutritional epidemiologist studying the effects of food insecure populations and how certain health factors contribute to consistent occurrences of chronic disease. Kiara has joined advocate groups, such as the Chicago Food Policy Action Council, which has enabled her to fully grasp the need for improving current food systems. At Illinois, she is an intern at Students Pushing Innovation (SPIN) with Prof. Jill Naiman. Kiara will work with Nutritional Sciences Prof. Manabu Nakamura and Common Ground Food Co-Operative to explore the feasibility of creating and sustainably operating co-op type grocery stores in low-income areas of Champaign County. Learn more about the project here: <https://healthinstitute.illinois.edu/connect/news/introducing/2023/community-academic/scholars>

STUDENT SPEAKERS



Gloria-Marianna Escobar
Senior, ACES



Shaniyah Jackson
Sophomore, LAS

STUDENT HOSTS



Sola Adeyiga
Sophomore, LAS



Anjali Prabhakar
Freshman, AHS



Tianna Arteaga
Junior, LAS

**OMSA 55TH ANNUAL
MOM'S DAY SCHOLASTIC
AWARDS CEREMONY**

The Office of Minority Student Affairs was proud to host the 55th Annual Mom's Day Scholastic Awards Ceremony on April 16th, 2023. We honored thousands of our students who excelled academically over the past two semesters.

We were joined by the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Dr. Danita Young Brown who offered her congratulations and two student speakers who offered their remarks on the impact of the OMSA and a summation of their experiences at the University of Illinois.

We were also proud to acknowledge all of the wonderful Mothers who have sacrificed and helped their students with their numerous successes along the way. We were so excited to see you all and can't wait until year!

See our group photo on the cover!

HIGHLIGHTING OMSA ASC'S TOP TUTORS

One of the benefits of my job is getting to know and work with an impressive group of bright, talented tutors. Listening in on their tutoring sessions is often an edifying experience, helping me relearn long forgotten math or chemistry concepts. In addition to their knowledge of course structure, expectations, and subject matter, the tutors I am highlighting today are also valued for their patience, encouragement, empathy, sense of humor, and overall professionalism. They embody what most students want in a tutor: someone who feels dedicated to providing a good balance of guided and independent practice and making tutoring a pleasant growth experience. They are engaged in all aspects of our operation and always ready to assist with final exam review sessions and other work assignments. These three are excellent representatives of the OMSA Academic Services Center.

- Grace Casillas, Assistant Director, Tutoring and Instructional Services



Emma Lin | Chemistry Tutor

I'm a Junior in Integrative Biology. The thing I like most about being a tutor is getting to watch the students I'm helping grow as people and also in their self-confidence. I also love having the privilege of getting to see that eureka moment when they finally get something that they have been struggling with! Right now, tutoring has helped me prepare for the MCAT. It has also allowed me to work with many people from many different backgrounds, which is an important skill to have wherever you go.

Alfredo Guzman | Math & Physics Tutor

What I like the most about being a tutor is developing interpersonal connections with new people. I like being able to help others with their classes and give them confidence in what they are learning and to provide mentorship and general college advice. I am hoping to be a TA next year when I am in grad school. Being a tutor has helped me understand people's learning styles and methods of solving problems, which will help me out as a TA. I am currently a senior graduating in May 2023 with a Bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering.



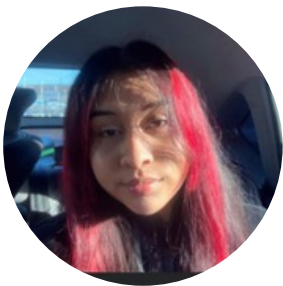
Sa'eedat Idris | Chemistry Tutor



I love being able to build connections with students and personally contribute to their academic growth. I always point out to my tutees that I've been where they are before and know exactly how it can feel. I believe that being a student at the university as well helps students feel more comfortable, since they are working with someone in a similar position. This makes it easier for them to see me as an ally. As an OMSA tutor, I have been exposed to a variety of different backgrounds. Working with diverse cultures and learning styles has reinforced many skills that will surely carry into my future academic and professional careers. Tutoring at OMSA has allowed me to understand the importance of inclusivity and having a sense of community. I am a Junior majoring in I-Health with a Health Diversity concentration.

ACHIEVING SUCCESS THROUGH OMSA ADVISING & MENTORING: STUDENT STORIES

The Advising & Mentoring units' goal is to help students reach beyond their coursework to experience all the University has to offer. To meet this goal, our Student Success Advisors and Mentors are sure to go the extra mile for students while advocating on their behalf and actively listening to share meaningful opportunities that will positively contribute to their collegiate journey. Our students are excited to share with you more about their experience being active OMSA students!



Viviana Ordoñez | Sophomore, LAS

As a first-generation college student from Chicago studying Chemical Engineering, the OMSA has been a huge help. I have been involved in the Advising & Mentoring program since my freshman year. During my success in the Advising & Mentoring program, I have been connected with numerous resources to ensure my success in my courses. I'm excited to share that I'm an OMSA ambassador and involved in several Pre-Medical programs on campus.

Monisa Yusra | Freshman, LAS

OMSA Advising & Mentoring has proven to be a valuable resource in my college career thus far. Collaborating with my mentor, Shawn Hampton, has been a positive and impactful experience. Initially, I was apprehensive about the Intercollegiate Transfer (ICT) process to Gies. After only meeting with him once, I felt less stressed about the process. Not only has he guided me academically but has been a great support system for non-academic related things. With Shawn's guidance and expertise, I was able to start my own RSO and made my dreams feel achievable.



Tea Raquel Byrd | Freshman, DGS

OMSA has helped me settle down as a freshman, in multiple ways, whether that's emotional or mentally, they have helped me. As a student, I have been able to achieve my academic and social goals. With how much progress I have made, I am constantly open to asking for help, instead of being afraid to. -



Jesus Tinoco | Sophomore, GIES

My name is Jesus Tinoco, a current Freshman at the Gies College of Business, and a proud Mexican student here at U of I. I started meeting with Mr. Shawn Hampton last year at the beginning of my freshman year after I received multiple emails about advising from the Office of Minority Student Affairs and decided to arrange the first meeting just to see what I could get out of it. As a freshman in such a big school who also comes from a minority, it is hard to find your way around and even more importantly, to navigate and use the many different resources this school has to offer to facilitate your future success. Mr. Hampton has been my greatest resource in this matter as he has been the most important source of advice and motivation through academic and life struggles since we first met last semester. I especially enjoy his passion to help others as well as his willingness to listen to not only your academic problems but also your life struggles in general which in most cases end up affecting your academic performance. Overall, OMSA's advising & mentoring services through Mr. Hampton has been one of the greatest blessings I have encountered, and I look forward to keeping making use of such great opportunity we as minority students have here on campus.

Our Student Success Advisors and Mentors continue to do wonderful and impactful work daily. We have over 3000 one-on-one meetings with students where we empower them to be their best advocate. We believe in our students' resiliency to accomplish their goals and are here to provide support, encouragement, and guidance along the way.

OMSA AMBASSADORS WELCOME NEW COHORT

OMSA Ambassadors are established and burgeoning campus leaders that uphold OMSA's mission to provide exceptional support services to first generation, low income, and historically underrepresented students at Illinois. In doing so, the OMSA Ambassadors learn to exemplify the four tenets of student excellence: Achievement, Leadership, Professionalism, Service.



Photo from the Spring 2023 OMSA Ambassadors retreat

This Spring, the OMSA welcomed our latest cohort of Ambassadors who gathered for a semester retreat at the OMSA on Oregon Street to plan for the semester and beyond! During the Retreat, the Ambassadors engaged in team building exercises to form a foundation of trust and begin building a platform to create exceptional enrichment experiences for their peers! Since then, the Ambassadors have actively participated in several major campus events and programs including the Campus Illini Days and the OMSA's Annual Mom's Day Scholastic Awards Ceremony, with several being recognized as High Achieving Scholars during the program. The team looks forward to closing out the semester strong and preparing to greet our incoming Illini in the Fall!

Interested in joining? <https://omsa.illinois.edu/academic-services-center/academic-outreach/omsa-ambassadors/>

TRIO UPWARD BOUND

TRIO**UPWARD BOUND**

According to the Council for Opportunity in Education (COE), a congressional resolution declared February 28th as National TRIO Day. A day to honor the achievements of the eight TRIO programs and its scholars. Hence, on February 25, 2023, on the campus of Olney Central College in Olney, Illinois, our UIUC OMSA TRIO Upward Bound students joined approximately 300 other Illinois TRIO students as TRIO programs across the nation celebrated National TRIO Day! This year's theme was A Walking Success Story. Our TRIO students were able to engage in topics ranging from social emotional and physical health to financial literacy, diversity, and self-advocacy. Here's what Kenya Allen, shared about their experience, "I personally enjoyed the National TRIO Day Conference. It was a great way to make learning fun and give TRIO students a community to come together and work together. Definitely, an experience like no other. It made me excited as a trio member to go to the next one. Thank you for hosting and treating us so well." No, thank you Kenya for your commitment to your education and for allowing the UIUC OMSA Upward Bound family witness your success story!

TRIO TALENT SEARCH SPRING COLLEGE TOUR



With the collegiate students resting and preparing for their final surge towards academic excellence on and away from the campus of the University of Illinois during Spring Break! TRIO Talent Search students (grades 9-12) traveled to the south in search of warmer weather, cultural experiences and post-secondary educational opportunities in Tennessee and Arkansas.



Students toured 3 university campuses in the states of Tennessee and Arkansas. Those universities were Christian Brothers University, University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, and the University of Central Arkansas. Students received admissions presentations, college tours, and conversations with staff, faculty, and students while also being afforded a University of Central Arkansas (UCA) dining experience.



Students also explored the National Civil Rights Museum (History: Memphis, TN), the Memphis Pyramid (Science: Memphis, TN) and fun activities and amusement at Action Jacks (STEM: Conway, AR). Students enhanced their knowledge in college and career exploration, college options and college preparation. Students are already looking towards the next educational experience provided by Talent Search.



SSS students engaged in a creating confidence interactive activity at the Siebel Center.

TRIO STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES (SSS) SPRING WORKSHOPS

This spring TRIO/Student Support Services (SSS) held a variety workshops, social events, and cultural opportunities.

The first of these workshops Building Creative Confidence was held in February at the Siebel Center for Design. In the workshop SSS participants engaged in a fun, team activity aimed at exploring and fostering creative confidence. Creative confidence is the belief that people can develop their creative mindsets and that combining critical thinking and collaboration leads to greater innovation and problem-solving skills. Siebel staff also lead us on a walking tour of the facilities which includes meeting spaces, workrooms, a media studio, and a workshop equipped with all types of tools available for staff and student use from simple handsaws to laser cutters and 3D printers.

In March, TRIO/SSS held two additional workshops, each focused on student health and wellness. The Women's Resource Center (WRC) gave an informative presentation called Cookies and Consent. This workshop explored the concept of consent and how to understand and navigate consent. This included a cookie decorating activity to illustrate what actual consent might look like in practice. SSS, furthering the concept of student wellness, collaborated with the Counseling Center for a Stress Management workshop. Students and counselors participated in an interactive discussion sharing insights into common college and life stressors, strategies for stress reduction, practical wellness tips, and available campus resources.

As a cultural enrichment activity, SSS students were encouraged to attend the Lviv National Philharmonic Orchestra of Ukraine to experience an evening of classical music that included works of the standard classical repertoire. SSS is looking forward to complementing our regular, individualized services with our remaining spring programs, and wrapping up the academic year with our Annual TRIO/SSS End of the Year Recognition.

TRIO MCNAIR SCHOLARS ATTEND ANNUAL MCNAIR CONFERENCE

McNair Scholars attended the 24th annual University of Maryland Conference for McNair Scholars and Undergraduate research this spring break. At this conference students had the opportunity to network, learn about grad school, connect with fellow scholars, and hear from distinguished speakers! A huge shoutout to the McNair staff who accompanied our scholars-Derek McFarland (Graduate Assistant) and Jarijion Minnet (Assistant Director).

McNair Scholars in attendance: Genesis Francine Del Real, Kevin Gonzalez-Basilio, Monserrat Gonzalez-Gutierrez, Lithzuly Pizano, Sofia Rivera, Jocelyn S. Rubi, Eduardo Tovar, Robert A Walker Jr



NEW TUTOR COORDINATOR JOINS THE OMSA ACADEMIC SERVICES CENTER



VISALAKSHI MURUGESAN

We asked Visalakshi the following questions to get to know her a little better:

1. What program you are in at the university and what drew you to it?
2. What is the most exciting part of your role as a tutor coordinator at the OMSA ASC?
3. Name three fun facts about yourself.

Here are her responses:

1. I believe our actions impact the world around us and I hope to make a positive difference wherever I can. Being an architect and having an affinity towards landscapes, I aspire to design landscapes for streets, parks, and cities and partner with local communities to create sustainable and resilient landscapes that will evolve but endure. I am currently a master's candidate in Landscape architecture.
2. I love the fact that I get to meet a lot of students from culturally diverse backgrounds. It is a wonderful learning process at OMSA. The thought of being able to make an impact on student life excites me the most.
3.
 - a. I can watch Modern Family any number of times.
 - b. I enjoy being around people, I cannot survive alone.
 - c. I want to do a road trip across Spain someday.



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