



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



Hope springs eternal at the OMSA!

2020 was a challenging year. Many were lost, and we who remain were stretched to our limit, yet we persist. I am grateful that we have this opportunity to regroup

and affirm our commitment to the OMSA's worthy mission. Energized by a thrilling basketball season and Big 10 Championship, we are optimistic and focused on our future.

Resilience is one of our core values, and our alumni, staff, and students are overcomers. We will continue to surpass the obstacles before us and realize our dreams. That is who we are, and that is what we do. I-L-L-I-N-I!

As the spring semester ends, we are happy to report OMSA students are excelling at Illinois. This edition of the Advocate will feature numerous students who are thriving across the spectrum of academic and preprofessional endeavors. Their inspiring stories demonstrate the true Power of I and offer a window into the lengths which the OMSA goes to create inclusive experiences that positively impact the lives of our students.

In closing, I would like to take this opportunity to extend my very best wishes to the graduating class of 2021. I speak for everyone in the OMSA when I say we are incredibly proud of you and we wish each of you every success.

Yours in Orange and Blue,

Domonic Cobb, Director of the Office of Minority Study Affairs & TRIO Programs

FAA '96 and EDU'01

According to the Office of Student Financial Aid, students had nearly **\$114 million in unmet financial need this year**. This means our students must raise millions to remain in school. They need our help. Please join the OMSA in helping our students eliminate this funding shortfall by giving a tax-deductible gift to one, or all, of our scholarship funds.

Visit www.omsa.illinois.edu/give to contribute.



Our featured fund in this edition is the **Greta Hogan Student Persistence Scholarship**. The Greta Hogan fund was created in 2018 on the 60th anniversary of Greta Hogan's arrival in our community. Greta, as she is affectionately known by her students, is a legendary U of I educator and administrator. She taught, mentored, and advocated for thousands of Illinois' first-generation, low-income, and historically underrepresented students across four decades. In honor of her amazing legacy to Illinois students, we are featuring her fund this school year. Please join me in donating to reach our \$25,000 endowment goal this school year!

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!

TRIO UPWARD BOUND SENIORS COLLEGE BOUND!



Corey Barnes, Senior, Centennial HS

Despite a global pandemic, the TRIO Upward Bound Senior class of 2021 has received over 60 college acceptances. One such outstanding student is Corey Barnes, Senior at Centennial High School.

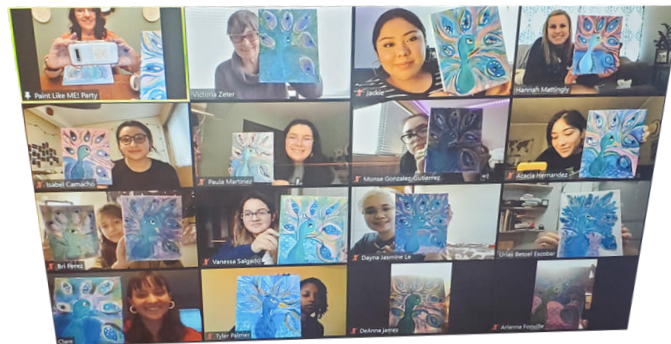
"My four years of high school have been marvelous. I was very involved with extracurricular activities.

From sports and social functions/events to clubs and fundraising. Academically, I struggled but with the help of my family, teachers, friends, and Upward Bound. I got through it all.

I have only one month left of being a senior and I'm going to make the most out of it!!"

Corey is currently deciding between 5 college offers for this fall!

BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH DIGITAL WORKSHOPS



TRIO SSS Paint Like Me Event

As we pass one year of fully digital services, our TRIO programs have found innovative ways to continue building community while remaining socially distant. All of our programs have hosted interactive workshops to bring some of the hands on activities we normally put on into our students homes. Recently, the SSS program held a Paint Like Me event, letting students showcase their art skills and relax as the semester draws close to an end.

STUDENT SPEAKERS



Ciara Johnson
Senior, LAS



Nevers Mushimata
Senior, LAS



Katelynn Soto
Senior, Media

OMSA 53RD ANNUAL MOM'S DAY SCHOLASTIC AWARDS CEREMONY

The Office of Minority Student Affairs was proud to host the 53rd Annual Mom's Day Scholastic Awards Ceremony on April 11th, 2021. While on-going limitations on in-person gatherings prompted a virtual celebration, the OMSA was able to continue honoring thousands of our students who excelled academically over the past two semesters. This year, in total, **6,735 students were eligible to participate, with 3,975 students earning Honors, while 2,760 students earned High Honors.**

We were joined by Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, Dr. Danita Brown-Young who offered her congratulations and three 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 our students (and staff!) with their numerous successes along the way. While we would love to have met in person, we were thrilled with the large online turn out and greater accessibility to the event!

TRIO TALENT SEARCH THRIVES DESPITE COVID-19 CHANGES

TRIO Talent Search continued to support Talent Search participants during the coronavirus crisis through STEAM activities, interactive online modules and virtual academic learning sites created by staff. Talent Search staff stayed interactive with students by phone and video chat in order to help them find a sense of normalcy in the midst of this pandemic.

Talent Search student's exposure includes virtual cultural experiences, college and career summits along with attending the National TRIO Day Celebration. Talent Search Staff will continue to serve their students in the upcoming months and through the summer through STEM activities provided by UNC Morehead Planetarium, Illinois Summer Academies through 4-H, Pre-College STEM Summer Youth Programs provided by the College of Aces and a Future Film Makers Camp.

TALENT SEARCH HIGHLIGHTS FROM '19-20 DEPT. OF ED ANNUAL REPORT

100%

'19-'20
*Secondary
Persistence*

100%

'19-'20
*Secondary
Graduation*

54%

*of '20 Seniors
took rigorous
course of study*

52%

*of '20 Seniors
enrolled in
college*

ILLINOIS TRIO DAY 2021

TRIO Day 2021 was a little bit different this year, but locally and nationally, TRIO still worked hard to put together an exciting celebration for students and staff. TRIO Day is a celebration of everything that TRIO programs do with our students, helping them build their confidence, excel at their academic and personal endeavors, and share the tools they need to achieve their dreams. TRIO Day 2021 held its festivities online this year, but that did not dampen the mood. Instead of the traditional in-person gathering of TRIO programs throughout northern Illinois, TRIO programs across the state gathered in a virtual celebration of TRIO, its programs and our students.

The day for our OMSA TRIO students began on Saturday morning when students participated in a virtual OMSA-led pre-conference event. Following opening remarks from Director Domic Cobb, we played TRIO Trivia and learned more about the proud history of the TRIO programs, especially those at Illinois. TRIO was founded in 1964 as a part of Lyndon B. Johnsons War on Poverty initiative, beginning with Upward Bound but soon growing to include Talent Search and Student Support Services.

Following that was our campus bucket list challenge, where students took turns talking about all of the things they want to accomplish during and after their TRIO experiences, both the serious and the silly. Director Cobb gave us some parting words about OMSA, all of the work we do, and what amazing students and staff we have as a part of our programs,

The Illinois Event hosted a virtual DJ, a keynote speaker, and a variety of break out sessions and speakers, including seminars on

the experiences of being a first generation student, how to encourage a positive work/life balance, and how to use social justice movements to make the world a better place, both inside the classroom and beyond. The TRIO family from across the state all came together to remind us all of what we can achieve while working towards our goals together. Overall, Illinois TRIO Day 2021 was full of fun and celebration--both remembering our past while looking forward to our students' bright futures.



ACADEMIC SERVICES CENTER: STILL SERVING THE OMSA'S STUDENTS

The Spring 2021 semester still finds the OMSA Academic Services Center operating fully virtually. While we look forward to returning to in-person services we are proud to be able to offer all our services during this difficult time.

ACADEMIC OUTREACH: STUDENT HIGHLIGHT



Kennedy Campbell, filming for the Amazon show, The College Tour.

"I have loved my time working with The Office of Minority Student Affairs. OMSA has provided me with so much guidance throughout my college experience. OMSA has been with me every step of the way, from tutoring in Molecular and Cellular Biology to Advising on my academic progress. As the Vice President of Internal Ambassador Affairs, I work with the Ambassadors to promote events and recruit more students to join the mission of OMSA!

I am honored to be a part of The Office of Minority Student Affairs because so many doors have opened up for me. I will be featured on a TV show called The College Tour to talk about my college experience being a first-generation college student and a minority student. Here at the University of Illinois, I was able to start a Registered Student Organization called Mentors in Medicine to give guidance to other students interested in the health field.

Because of my involvement and academics, I was selected to participate in the Summer Health Professions Education Program with the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) at The University of California Los Angeles (UCLA). I am so excited to continue working with OMSA and invite you all to join us!"

-Kennedy Katalinda Campbell

ACADEMIC SERVICES CENTER: STILL SERVING THE OMSA'S STUDENTS CONT.

ADVISING & MENTORING: STUDENT HIGHLIGHT

"OMSA is an amazing resource available to students and so important to campus. Oftentimes, minority students don't have an outlet or resource readily accessible to them, especially at a time of great transition in college. Being a minority, I happen to be a first-gen student at college, as is the case with many, and it is incredibly helpful to have these mentors and guides to provide me with the information and the support to start college and believe that I can do so much with my time here!

During my first year, the OMSA paired me with my graduate mentor, who became an instant

go-to resource for me. Knowing someone was there to listen to and help me pursue my goals who could also relate to a lot of the experiences of being a minority was extremely valuable to me. I learned about so much from her and figured out a lot within my first few months. OMSA is a unique resource that undeniably wants to reach out to minority students and help them through the transition into college and further on into your years. It is amazing to take advantage of and definitely a go-to if you are ever worried, confused, or just seeking some opportunity or fun workshop to attend!"

-Noral Nofal



Noral Nofal, Senior, College of Media

ACADEMIC SERVICES CENTER: ADAPTING AND THRIVING! CONT.

OMSA Celebrates its Excellent Tutors

The Office of Minority Student Affairs' tutoring program has been in existence for almost as long as the OMSA. It started in the late 1970s with just a handful of eager student volunteers who wanted to help tutor freshman students with math and science courses. After a few years of providing space for these volunteers to meet with students, the OMSA decided to make it an official student position complete with training and pay. Over the years, our program has grown to employ up to 100 undergraduate student employees and provide tutoring for up to 50 different freshman-level courses.

We have just completed a full year of providing our tutoring completely online, something we had never envisioned for our program. To be sure, it was a stressful year filled with a lot of "firsts" - our tutors had to learn how to tutor via Zoom and GoBoard, and all of our meetings and the training for new tutors were conducted online. When there is as much uncertainty as we experienced this past year, departments may be tempted to avoid the hassle of overhauling their own tutoring program and they may opt to subscribe to one of the many flourishing online tutoring services already on the market. That may be a good option if the tutoring you provide is remedial.

Remediation has never been the issue for us - University of Illinois students are not remedial students. Our primary goal has always been to provide tutoring services for our freshman students to make a very large campus feel smaller and more welcoming. Freshman students are often urged to join study groups, especially for their large auditorium-sized classes in which they may not get much of an opportunity to interact with the professor. However, if you're the only a minority student in a large, 400-student class, it may be really daunting to approach other students about forming a study group. Coming to OMSA's Academic Services Center to meet with a tutor for a specific course is a great way

ACADEMIC SERVICES CENTER: ADAPTING AND THRIVING! CONT.

to meet with another University of Illinois student who has already taken that course and knows exactly what you are going through. In addition to meeting with a tutor for an hour every week, students can also use our “drop-in” tutoring services for math, chemistry, and physics. Our tutors are extensively trained in the first year that they work for us. Most of the training they receive is centered on tutoring pedagogy but our tutors understand that they are also mentors and role models to the students they serve.

In addition to the academic services we provide to our freshman students, OMSA is also dedicated to creating leaders among the upper classmen through our tutoring positions. Working with students one-on-one and in groups enhances a tutor’s teaching and communication skills and it helps them develop their critical thinking and leadership skills. Many of our tutors begin working for us during their sophomore year and stay until they graduate.

As proud as we are of our graduating senior tutors, this is always a bittersweet time for us. Tutoring is one of those jobs in which one gets better and better at it as time goes on. By the time our tutors are ready to graduate, they have become our most dependable, confident, and proficient tutors and it is so difficult to see them go. The 2020-2021 crop of graduates includes: Luis Aragon, Natalia Brzezinski, Kevin Farrell, Diana Garcia, Ethan Kuruc, Xiao Lin, Nevers Mushimata, Liliana Perez, Edward Tang (December graduate), and Shuning Yang. We wish them the best of luck in all they do as they go out in the world!

Xiao Lin



I am going to Columbia University for a masters program in Psychology in Education. It has a great location - NYC. I enjoy being in a diverse city. It will have a lot of networking and job opportunities.

My words of advice to freshman students are to spend your time with friends when you can. Hanging out with friends is really important for your mental health! (writing this when I am thinking about our situation now during COVID)



Kevin Farrell

Hopefully I will be moving to California with friends & doing internships. I will not be going to grad school. I love the breadth of the U of I - first of all, just on the physical level it took all 4 of my years here to feel like I was acquainted with the entirety of campus and there is a baseline level of sentimentality that comes from courses and experiences that take you to a new building every so often. And of course there are people here who are deeply invested in all sorts of different things. There's all sorts of different things you can do to get what you need to out of schoolwork, but - for people in on-campus housing - I felt much more like I was here for a reason when I started spending an hour each day walking around the C/U area. For a while, it had been easy for me not to register that, half a mile outside of campus in each direction, there will be kids trick-or-treating in October.

Natalia Brzezinski

After graduation, I will be starting dental school in the fall at Northwestern University in Downers Grove, IL. I'm very excited to start this next chapter in my life and am very grateful to have gotten accepted to a school with such a great program that will prepare me in my journey of becoming a dentist.

There are many things I will miss about the University of Illinois. I will definitely miss the camaraderie and community that is felt by being an Illini. The support and pride that comes with going to this school is incomparable and I am so thankful to have been able to become part of this community with so many hardworking, passionate, and dedicated students and faculty. I will definitely miss the happiness and pride that is felt just walking around campus. I will also miss my favorite spot on campus which is the quad on a warm spring day.

My advice to freshman would be to take advantage of all the amazing opportunities the university provides us with. If you want to join a club but feel inexperienced or afraid, do it! You will be able to meet so many new people and learn new skills or pick up a new hobby by doing so! Although you may feel like you have a lot of time on this campus and it can be tempting to put things off or tell yourself that you will try it next year, time really does fly by here in Champaign, one day you are a freshman and then next day you are one month away from graduating. So take advantage of all the opportunities you have to learn or try something new or become a part of something you really want to be a part of! The 4 years you have here are a time for growth and you have to learn and try new things to grow!

Nevers Mushimata



I will be attending the MCB Masters Program here at UIUC. I feel it will adequately prepare me for a future PhD application through exposure to advanced methods and concepts, in addition, this experience will also let me network with Professors conducting interesting research topics in the Department of Molecular and Cell Biology. I hope I can enjoy my presumably (depending on whether I'd need an additional semester) last year here on campus, during the Masters program, by exploring our areas parks and nature sites, which I truly enjoy. My words of advice to freshman students are: It's very important to keep yourself on your toes, at all times, by trying to question/critique the material presented to you because it keeps both your interest and anticipation high.

Liliana Perez



After graduation, I plan on heading back home to Chicago and jump into the industry to gain work experience before applying to graduate school in the Fall to pursue a program in Genetic Counseling.

I will definitely miss the atmosphere of simply walking through campus and being surrounded by people who are challenging themselves every day. I come from a big city, and it was great to experience a new environment and visiting local restaurants.

These past four years have filled me with the experiences that have shaped my personal and academic growth. Adapting to life during a pandemic has been a shift to what a "normal" campus looks like, but nevertheless, I wish incoming students take advantage of not only the resources on campus but the community of Champaign-Urbana. There are local organizations that are welcoming to anyone who is willing to serve and it's an open door to learn about the issues faced by many and the stories of others. It takes exploration to learn what you wish to pursue and you should not be afraid to take on new endeavors.

I have an internship this summer following my graduation and then will attend graduate school for at least a master's in electrical engineering and am considering continuing onto a Ph.D. upon completion of my MS.

I've decided on accepting my offer to Stanford for an MS in electrical engineering. I chose Stanford since their department is one of the best for the subarea of optimization and control which is the research I'm interested in pursuing. I was also offered a course assistant position that will fund the duration of my MS which helped solidify my decision.

I'm going to miss all the great people I had the pleasure of meeting throughout my four years year not only within my department and courses but everyone I met through OMSA while being a tutor.

Although I'm still not the best at time management in the slightest, I would advise freshmen to keep an organized calendar and set aside time to relax and distract themselves from their work for at least a little while.

Luis Aragon



Shuning Yang

My plan is to pursue a masters degree in business analytics. I have not decided where I want to go. I am still waiting on two more schools to make my decision. One will release the result after 4.16, and the other hopefully next week. I will miss my friends the most. I am an international student and I decided to stay in the US due to the policies and uncertainties. So I felt really lucky to have close friends here. They have been very supportive and fun to be around. To freshman students, I would say take advantage of the university resources and start planning for the future early.

I plan on taking a gap year to work before applying to law school. I will miss the main quad! It is a centerpiece of my educational experience. Seeing other students on my way to class or the library gave meaning and inspiration to my studies. Studying at home, especially during the Covid-19 Pandemic, is not as special. My words of advice to freshman students: Try to not overburden yourself with work. There is often pressure to be extremely accomplished with extracurriculars, research, a job, internships, minors or a dual degree. Pick a few things that are the most meaningful to you and focus your energies on them. The quality of your accomplishments are more meaningful than the quantity.

Ethan Kuruc



Neha Chandani



I plan to be attending graduate school in the Fall, pursuing a Master's degree in Counseling to eventually become a Licensed Professional Counselor. I have not decided which school yet but I'm mostly focusing on schools in the local Chicagoland area.

I'll miss the people I interacted with on-campus and the physical campus space itself. It was a wonderful place to attend as part of my formative years and I got the opportunity to meet a lot of great people.

My advice for freshman students would be to look for resources as many are offered on campus, even if not advertised. And also to take any opportunities that sound interesting to them. A student panel led me to tutor at OMSA and I haven't looked back since then.



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Cover: Kennedy Campbell, OMSA
Ambassador and Tutor
Back: Mural painted by OMSA Students, 1998