



# 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!

## WHAT'S INSIDE?

- 02 **NEW NAME, SAME MISSION!**
- 03 **NEWS BITES: WHAT'S NEW?**
- 12 **ON TO GREATNESS: SENIOR HIGHLIGHTS**
- 18 **WELCOME OUR NEW AMBASSADORS!**

# PSST... WE HAVE AN ANNOUNCEMENT!

## NEW Name, SAME Mission!



**“The strongest people are not those who show strength in front of us but those who win battles we know nothing about.”**

**Boomsumo.com**

This quote epitomizes the legacy of and fortifies the foundation in which our unit’s structure and services were formed. Our longest serving director, Michael L. Jeffries, Sr.’s influence is broad and deep, but not because he carried a big stick but rather, he knew how to speak softly.

Thus, his ability to successfully advocate in the offices and hallways of Swanland, in the offices and hallways of the Colleges and the offices and hallways in Washington, DC meant impactful policies, concrete capital and other tangible resources for sustainable retention services. Due to his skillful choreography, scores of talented alum and currently enrolled undergraduate students know the value of being seen as part of the Illinois community and supported through coaching and mentorship, structuralized academic support, scholarships, and research opportunities. Therefore, we are delighted to announce effective Fall 2024, the Office of Minority Student Affairs will now be known as The **Michael L. Jeffries, Sr. Center for Access and Academic Success** (in short, the Jeffries Center).

For many, the name “OMSA” signifies the legacy of the civil rights movement, access, affirmation, refuge and an acknowledgement of self and campus presence. For some time, the Afro-American Cultural Center, and La Casa Cultural Latina cultural fell under the auspices of the OMSA and programs such as the Diversity and Social Justice Education and offices like the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (OVCDEI) were not in existence. As such, the OMSA and offices such as the campus’ Ombudsman (1960-1992) served as the nucleus for academic services, social justice education, inclusion and belonging programming, identity building programming, and general advocacy.

In AY 88-89, the Afro-American Cultural Program and La Casa Cultural Latina became and remain standalone units, and in the 2000’s with the creation of other units such as Diversity and Social Justice Education (DSJE) and OVCDEI, our unit continues to share the education, civic and moral responsibility around inclusivity, affinity and belonging. Yet, harnessing the strength of each unit, we are strategically able to hone our efforts allowing each to focus on their key area of specialization. For our unit, the key area remains academic success.

While “OMSA” was our third and longest standing name (36 years), it was our duty to embark upon identifying a new name that would honor our rich shared history. As the Jeffries Center, the emphasis remains staunchly aligned with its original Educational Opportunities Program (EOP) mission: “...providing exceptional support services that enhance the academic achievement, personal development, and graduation rates of first generation, low-income, and historically underrepresented students at Illinois. We hope you will agree that paying homage to and aligning the name with, interconnects our mission, audience, scope and complements our core values and learning outcomes.

**Continued Success,**

**Kimberly J. Alexander-Brown, JD**

Executive Director, Office of Minority Student Affairs  
Director, TRIO Programs



## 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](mailto:omsasocial@illinois.edu)!

### TRIO SSS: A YEAR IN REVIEW

The TRIO Student Support Services (SSS) was fortunate to have had a terrific 2023-2024 academic year! SSS opened the fall semester with an Orientation Breakfast to welcome incoming students and wrapped up with the annual end of the year Student Recognition Dinner. Throughout the year, SSS held a variety of student activities (peer mentoring, bowling, and movie), workshops (wellness, leasing, and financial aid), and cultural events including Krannert productions (theater and dance), a nature walk, and crafts.

The Student Recognition Dinner celebrated SSS students' accomplishments and successes as well as highlighting this year's graduating class. SSS has 52 seniors graduating in May and August. Many of these students have secured jobs, while others will transition to graduate programs, including seven who will begin graduate studies here at the University of Illinois. They will join the 17 former SSS that are currently in University of Illinois graduate programs.



# TRIO TALENT SEARCH: PAVING THE WAY TOWARDS A BRIGHT FUTURE

## A Message from the TRIO Talent Search Team:

“With another year ending, TRIO Talent Search at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign continues to support our amazing students in their individual journeys toward bright futures. As we work towards completing their yearly goals and expectations, we acknowledge all of their individual efforts as well. Reaching big goals can be tough, but with TRIO Talent Search, it won’t ever be done alone.

TRIO Talent Search is proud of all our students. We are thankful for the opportunities provided to our students by the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and the Office of Minority Student Affairs (OMSA). Working together, we can continue to help our students tap into their unlimited potential.”

## Congratulations to our 2024 Graduates!

TRIO Talent Search is excited to celebrate our 83 graduating seniors and 53 eighth graders! Our 2024 Seniors have been accepted to over 83 colleges/ universities while others have chosen the path of trade and exploring military occupations in our armed forces. You are the ones that make **TRIO WORK!**



## Putting the “Talent” in Talent Search: Student Artwork Highlights

TRIO Talent Search would like to highlight two students whose artwork was displayed in the Art Gallery of the Illini Union March 6th - April 5th in The Eric Show (High School Arts Competition).





# TRIO UPWARD BOUND: NEW & FAMILIAR FACES

## WELCOMING STAFF AND STUDENT AMBASSADORS

The TRIO Upward Bound program is happy to announce the completion of onboarding a new Assistant Director, Courtney Bishop and a new Pre-College Advisor, Stephanie Ellison who have joined alongside the veteran Pre-College Advisor, Jordan Kuneyl. Upward Bound students were given opportunities to get to know the new leadership and team members. Students shared their experiences being in the program and they provided suggestions for how they would like to see the program moving forward in the future.



**Courtney Bishop**  
Assistant Director  
TRIO Upward Bound

## UPWARD BOUND STUDENT AMBASSADORS

New leadership roles were also announced by the Upward Bound Student Ambassadors who held elections to fill the chair positions of soon to be open committee roles. TRIO Upward Bound Student Ambassadors is a vital group who serve as liaison between their target school and TRIO Upward Bound. They strive to improve their leadership skills and empower the lives of their peers through their commitment to the program's principles: academic achievement, college readiness, and social development. Student Ambassadors also partner with TRIO program staff to advocate for students and support programmatic efforts. Student Ambassadors have also led student workshops to their peers during Saturday Academy and they are planning their Decision Day Celebration, with an allocated budget. TRIO Upward Bound is very proud of the Student Ambassadors for their leadership and commitment to serving and supporting TRIO Upward Bound and all it stands for!



## MCNAIR PROGRAM ON THE MOVE: SENIOR REFLECTIONS

Each year, McNair Scholars participate in an intensive summer research experience called the McNair Summer Research Institute (SRI). For their efforts, students are awarded a research stipend upon successful completion of the program. **Sophie Diaz**, Communication major and one of our graduating Seniors, who participated in SRI last summer, used her research stipend to help fund a trip to Paris, France where she continued her research endeavors and explored graduate school programs. Her reflection on her Paris trip is below:



“As a TRiO McNair Scholar, I have embraced my passion for Human Sexuality Studies and LGBTQIA+ rights, conducting research with my mentor and advisor, Dr. Billington. Under their guidance, I embarked on a sexology-based research study focused on the variances in perceptions and behaviors of women in undergraduate and graduate programs, particularly in Paris, France, and Illinois, USA. My goal was to explore and compare Western and American perceptions of gender identity, representation of sex, reproduction, and education through potential interviews with participants. This included investigating individuals’ upbringing, familial views, sexual education curriculums, societal expectations, and opinions on the political culture of their respective countries.

My mixed-methods research aimed to fill existing gaps in the field while challenging my thinking by learning from a culture often perceived as more liberal than the United States. With support from the TRiO McNair Scholars Program, I visited Paris in November to explore universities that would allow me to conduct research alongside them, one of them being the American University of Paris. This opportunity allowed me to immerse myself in European art, film, fashion, and culture, and to observe the differences firsthand. During my time there, I also managed to enjoy a visit to Disneyland Paris, the Louvre, the Catacombs, and the Eiffel Tower!

I am grateful to Mr. Cunningham, Ms. Minnett, Dr. Billington, and the TRiO McNair Scholars Program for guiding students from marginalized backgrounds and providing opportunities to pursue our passions. This program has empowered me to grow personally and professionally, whether through conferences, connections with others, or funding that gave me the choice to use it towards international experiences like my trip to France.

Thanks to the TRiO McNair Scholars Program, I am excited to announce that I will be attending the American University of Paris for my Master's in Global Communications. I carry the program’s namesake with pride and gratitude. Thank you, Dr. Ronald E. McNair, for giving students like me a community, a program, and values to rely on.”



## MCNAIR PROGRAM ON THE MOVE: SENIOR REFLECTIONS

Senior scholars are required to present their research as one of the requirements to earn their final research stipend. **Yasmen Pugh**, Psychology and Sociology double major, and graduating Senior, recounts her experiences on a recent trip to the University of Washington for The Gabriel E. Gallardo Research, Student Leadership & Advocacy Symposium:

"I really enjoyed traveling to Seattle, Washington where we presented our research, explored the city, and engaged with nature.

During our Wellness Workshop, we hiked at the Snoqualmie Falls, the graduate mentors discussed the importance of work-life balance in graduate school, and I even met a high school senior who will share one of my majors once he enrolls at the University of Washington in the fall.

The focus of our wellness workshop was mindfulness, so we listened to the environment around us, and our graduate mentors, who are both in the ecology Ph.D. program at UIUC, taught us about the multiple plants and birds we encountered in the forest and discussed the ways they relax when they aren't working on their degrees. Towards the end of the hike, we met a family who was visiting the university of admitted student day. I was able to provide advice about his potential major and pursuing undergraduate research. Meeting a future colleague in my field, in the middle of the forest, indicated that I was at the right place at the right time!

Presenting my research was an equally positive experience. I received a lot of positive feedback from many students in multiple disciplines who resonated with my presentation. One student was even able to connect with my research on a personal level, as she is also a military child. I was very blessed to be a part of a long conversation of military children, like myself, where we were able to discuss the importance of researching and sharing our lived experiences. Public speaking is not my favorite thing to do or something that I feel confident in doing, so hearing that my hard work was being recognized was encouraging and amazing to hear.

Despite all of the wonderful experiences I had on this trip, my favorite moment by far was meeting some of my extended family for the first time. My mother encouraged me to connect with one of my cousins who lives in Washington. My cousin earned her Ph.D. in Occupational Therapy, and provided my cohort members and I with some advice and encouragement as we embark on the next step in our educational careers. She is very inspirational and I'm so proud to call her my cousin, so shout out to her and all her hard work. My cohort members even shared that we look alike which is super cool! We were able to capture this moment directly in front of the Space Needle.

Overall, this trip reinforced the importance of continuing my education, networking, and conducting research. My engagement in these three areas have worked together to help me get accepted into a master's program and will later help me get accepted into a Ph.D. program, maybe at the University of Washington because I fell in love with the campus and the city! This life changing experience was important to document because this trip was all about firsts: my first time in Seattle, Washington, my first time on a ferry, my first time meeting my Seattle family, my first time at the Glass Museum, and so much more! I'm very blessed for the opportunities that the TRiO McNair Program have provided for me. I will forever be grateful!"



## THE BEST ENVIRONMENT FOR LEARNING! TUTORING & ACADEMIC SERVICES

Tutoring practices have not changed much in the past twenty years. We still use the same questioning techniques, motivational strategies, and facilitation methods. The work, itself, is still very much dependent on the tutor's communication skills and the experience gained from having taken the course successfully. So, while practices have not changed, the learning environment has definitely evolved into a much more tech-driven setting.

Gone are the days when all you needed for a productive tutoring session were a table, chairs, and a chalk board. With so many students either working on online assignments or using a computer app for their schoolwork, laptops have become a necessity in order to complete the work and also to review it during tutoring sessions. With that in mind, we recently decided to upgrade our tutoring space with furniture better suited for today's mode of tutoring. It's hard to believe but the furniture we had been using was the same furniture we got when we first moved into our Oregon Street location in 2007!

Our new furniture was specifically created for tutoring. Each table has a monitor to which students can connect their laptops to share their work with the tutor. The tables also have small whiteboard tablets that students and tutors can use instead of paper. The individual whiteboards come in handy when the room's two chalkboards are already being used by someone else. The new chairs have ergonomic features which provide better back support to allow students and tutors to focus on their work for the entire length of the tutoring session without distraction and discomfort. While we have always made it a priority to provide a welcoming and nurturing atmosphere in the Academic Services Center, we have learned that exploring other ways to enrich the learning experience must also include even basic things like the furniture.





## FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT INITIATIVES: HITTING THE GROUND RUNNING!

Under the leadership of the Associate Director for First-Generation Initiatives, Jennifer Mendez, the OMSA has participated in and crafted a **TON** of programs for First-Generation students across campus!

### HERE ARE A FEW HIGHLIGHTS!

The **Proud to Be First-Gen. Series** was thrilled to return for another semester of monthly program offerings. Informed by student feedback, workshops included a wide range of focus areas such as:

- A Campuswide Resource Fair in collaboration with the University library
- A Graduate School Affirmation workshop in collaboration with TRIO McNair and Gies Business
- A Scholarship Opportunities and Application Resources workshop in collaboration with the Career Center and Top Scholars
- A Study Abroad Opportunities workshop in collaboration with Grainger Engineering, LAS, and ACES

We've continued growing our presence with the **First-Gen. Campus Directory** now hosting a community of **140+ First-Gen. profiles**. Interested in applying? Check out [firstgen.illinois.edu](http://firstgen.illinois.edu) for a direct link to the online interest form.

The OMSA was well represented at the Illinois Student Assistance Commission's inaugural **First-Generation Symposium** which took place on March 11, 2024 at North Central College. The First Gen Symposium provided an opportunity for attendees from across the State of IL to learn and share best practices for supporting first generation students in postsecondary planning. Among the diverse range of 20 selected speakers, Director Mendez was able to share several of our ongoing best practices and efforts to promote First Generation Student Success at the University of Illinois.



# Advising Mentoring

## A&M FAFSA APPLICATION WORKSHOP AND NEW PARTNERSHIP WITH ISAC



Student Affairs  
Office of Minority Student Affairs

Advising  Mentoring

**FAFSA APPLICATION  
DROP-IN WORKSHOP**

Part I & Part II  
January 17, 2024  
&  
February 20, 2024  
3:00 pm - 4:30 pm

Get In-Person  
Support From

**ISAC**  
Illinois Student Assistance Commission

GET YOUR FAFSA COMPLETED!  
We look forward to helping you complete the  
application and be sure to bring your laptop!

The Office of Minority Student Affairs (OMSA) Advising & Mentoring (A&M) unit kicked off the Spring 2024 semester with an exciting resource for students to assist with the completion of the Federal Application for Free Student Aid (FAFSA). As a part of our Issues and Stressors workshop series, this workshop was created to meet our Financial stressor. We partnered with the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC) to bring students to the FAFSA Application Drop-In Workshop.

### Measuring Success: Bridging Gaps & Making Connections

The FAFSA Workshop was a great success and OMSA facilitated two sessions on January 17th and February 20th, 2024. Our OMSA eligible students had great questions but also faced many challenges while completing the application. Many of those challenges were among our students with undocumented parents/guardians. The OMSA and ISAC staff were on hand to assist students with their questions and refer them to either the Office of Student Financial Aid or the Federal Student Aid Information Center (FSAIC).

**We look forward to making this a permanent partnership and bringing this workshop to our future incoming classes!**





## ACHIEVING ENGAGEMENT THROUGH THE NEW ADVISING & MENTORING MILESTONE PROGRAM

The Advising & Mentoring unit is piloting our first Milestone Program for our Student Success Advising team. The A&M Milestone Program will be a consistent and thoughtful strategy to recognize our team members' professional accomplishments as an important part of tying in employee engagement, morale, and retention. The OMSA recognizes that our team members are our greatest asset and so we strive to acknowledge and appreciate their hard work, dedication, and commitment to the OMSA mission. The first award created to honor our advisors' accomplishments is the Student Success Advisor Performance Recognition. The Student Success Advisor Performance Recognition is only the first award as A&M plans to recognize our team members with future awards for their Years of Service and personal/professional growth for Earning a Certificate/Degree. We recognized our two Student Success Advisors, April Garrison and Maurice Haney.



**April Garrison** was recognized for her contributions to improve students advising & mentoring experience through successfully leading workshops that enhances student success during the Spring 2024 semester.

**Maurice Haney** was recognized for his contributions to improve students advising & mentoring experience through meeting with a significant number of unique OMSA eligible students during the Fall 23' semester.

**PLEASE JOIN US IN CONGRATULATING OUR STUDENT SUCCESS  
ADVISING TEAM MEMBERS ON THEIR ACCOMPLISHMENTS!**

# ON TO GREATNESS: SENIOR HIGHLIGHTS



## ANJALI PATEL

First-Generation College Student  
Interdisciplinary Health Sciences, Health Diversity

**Next Step:** "I will pursue a Master of Science in Law at Northwestern University Fall 2024."



## DAVID VAZQUEZ

First-Generation College Student  
Finance

**Next Step:** "I am delighted to share that I will soon embark on an exciting journey as a full-time Regulatory Compliance Examiner at the National Futures Association in Chicago IL. I eagerly anticipate the opportunity to learn, grow, and collaborate with the highly skilled professionals at NFA, contributing to the ongoing success of the organization."



## ANDREA VIVAR

OMSA Advising & Mentoring  
Industrial Engineering

**Next Step:** "After graduation, I'll join a three-month engineering development program before starting as an industrial engineer at UPS in Chicago, IL. I am excited to put all the skills and knowledge I have learned during my time at UIUC to use and contribute to the field of logistics and operations."



## ALEXANDRIA DEVINNEY

Tutor, Tutoring, Office Assistant, TRIO SSS, A&M, First-Gen.  
Community Health, Health Planning & Administration Concentration

**Next Step:** "After graduation, I will be attending the University of Illinois Chicago pursuing a Master of Healthcare Administration degree. I will work in healthcare while attending school there. I am thankful for my time here at UIUC and am excited for what is next to come."

# ON TO GREATNESS: SENIOR HIGHLIGHTS



## ALEX CLEVELAND

**First-Generation College Student  
History, Secondary Education**

**Next Step:** “After graduation I plan on becoming a high school social studies teacher, hopefully in the Chicagoland area. I am passionate about inquiry based, and student centered education.”



## JASON RODRIGUEZ

**First-Generation College Student  
Economics & Information Sciences, Data Science**

**Next Step:** “After graduation, I am planning to move to Chicago, Illinois, to work for Discover Financial Services. I am coming in full-time as a data scientist, where I will be apart of the rotational program Discover has to offer.”



## LUIS ALBERTO EGUIGUREN

**OMSA Student  
Natural Resources & Environmental Sciences, Environmental Manag.**

**Next Step:** “After graduation, I’ll join a three-month engineering development program before starting as an industrial engineer at UPS in Chicago, IL. I am excited to put all the skills and knowledge I have learned during my time at UIUC to use and contribute to the field of logistics and operations.”



## JOSE REYES

**First-Generation, TRIO SSS, OMSA Mentoring  
Civil Engineering**

**Next Step:** “I will return to Chicago to work Full-Time as a Project Engineer at F.H. Paschen. I will also be studying to take the F.E. Exam.”



# ON TO GREATNESS: SENIOR HIGHLIGHTS



## KAYLA ALEXIS TORRES

First-Generation, FOCUS Scholar

Agricultural & Consumer Economics, Consumer Econ. and Finance

**Next Step:** "I am so happy to share that I will be moving to Malibu, California after graduation to pursue a Full-Time Master of Science in Business Analytics (MSBA) at Pepperdine University Craziadio Business School Fall 2024 and participate in an analytics internship through the Pepperdine Education to Business initiative!"



## DAYNA LE

TRIO SSS, OMSA Ambassador

BASA Studio Arts, Fashion

**Next Step:** "I am graduating from the College of Fine and Applied Arts, but am excitedly returning in the fall for a Master's degree in Urban Planning. Afterwards, I hope to work in transportation."

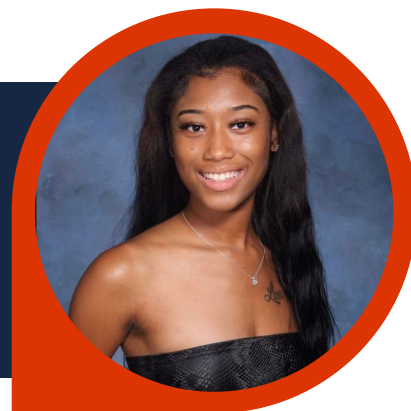


## CARLOS ASCENCIO

OMSA Student

Interdisciplinary Health Science

**Next Step:** "I plan to attend graduate school to become a PA. I'm truly thankful for the education the University of Illinois has offered me."



## AYANNIA DOUGLAS

First-Generation, OMSA Mentoring

Interdisciplinary Health Science

**Next Step:** "After graduation, I plan to work as an educator for Teach For America on a two-year commitment. As an educator I will work to ensure educational equity and engage students with learning in innovative ways. I plan to introduce students to a passion for learning which will equip them to seek advancements in their knowledge.."

# ON TO GREATNESS: SENIOR HIGHLIGHTS



## MIKHAIYA BARNES

**TRIO, Tutoring  
Integrative Biology**

**Next Step:** "Post graduation, I plan to obtain a dual master's degree in Public Health and Business Administration. I will then enter a career associated with leadership positions in healthcare organizations."

## ALLISON CERULLO

**First-Generation College Student  
Finance & Marketing**

**Next Step:** "Upon graduation, I will be starting my professional career at PepsiCo in Bridgeview, IL as a Supply Chain Finance Assistant Analyst. I am very excited to be returning to PepsiCo as I had an awesome internship experience last summer!"



## FERNANDA GARCIA

**First-Generation College Student  
English, Secondary Education**

**Next Step:** "After I graduate, I will be attending the UIC College of Nursing at the Urbana campus. I will be working towards my master's in nursing degree. I plan to being a travel nurse in the near future!"

## JOSHUA WATSON

**First-Generation College Student  
Advertising**

**Next Step:** "I plan on coming back to the school to obtain my master's degree in management from Gies. The job hunt will begin for me during the summer as I hope to find an internship as well. Other than that, I am excited to see what else God has planned for me in the future."



# OMSA ACADEMIC SERVICES CENTER: WHAT'S THE PLAN AFTER GRAD.?



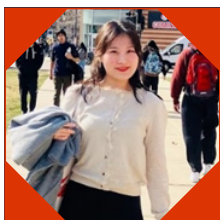
## **GABRIELA ABRIL, Tutor Coordinator**

"After graduation, I plan to travel to Ecuador for a month to visit the Galapagos Islands. After my trip, I wish to come back to Chicago to start my professional career in architecture and urban planning. My main post-graduation focus is to get more experience and focus on my personal development, so I am excited to see what new developments and challenges the future brings in which I can keep growing and gaining knowledge."



## **ISABEL LIANG, Front Desk Office Assistant**

"After graduation, I plan to pursue a Direct Entry Master's in Nursing program to transition into the field of nursing. This program will enable me to leverage my previous education while gaining the essential clinical skills and knowledge necessary to become a competent nurse. I am excited to embark on this journey and contribute to the healthcare profession while continuing to make a positive impact on the lives of those in need."

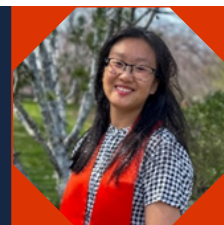


## **JIHYEON PARK, Tutor**

"I will be joining PwC, a public accounting firm, this July. The office is in Los Angeles so I will be moving to LA right after I graduate. I have had so many great memories working as a tutor at OMSA as I was able to interact with amazing students and tutors during my college years. I am both excited about and scared of the new journeys I will have once I graduate and hopefully, I can continue to have such amazing interactions with people at the new workplace and the new city."

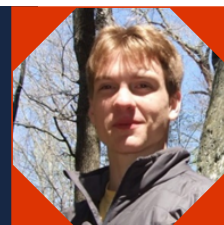
## **EMMA LIN, Tutor**

"Hi! I'm Emma, a chemistry and biology tutor and a soon-to-be graduate of the School of Integrative Biology. I'm still waiting on medical school decisions, so hopefully I will be a future doctor in DC next semester. I will also be Commissioning as an active-duty officer in the US Army this May. I'm so grateful for my time at OMSA and I can't wait to see what the future brings!"



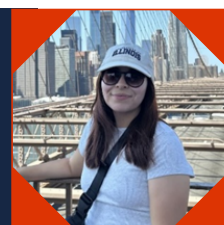
## **ELIOT SMITH, Tutor**

"My name is Eliot and I will be graduating in May with a degree in Engineering Physics. I've accepted an offer to work for Epic after graduation as a Client Systems Administrator working on healthcare software. I'll be moving to Madison for the role and am looking forward to the opportunity."



## **JEANETTE GUERRERO, Tutor**

"After graduating with my bachelor's in civil engineering, I will begin working for Benesch, an engineering consultant firm, as a Designer in their Chicago office, beginning in late June. I will also be continuing my education through the CEE online master's program in structural engineering at UIUC part-time starting in the fall. I am excited to begin working on real-life projects, and to also move back to Chicago and spend some more time with my family and friends back home!"





# OMSA ACADEMIC SERVICES CENTER: WHAT'S THE PLAN AFTER GRAD.?



**PARMEET KAUR, Tutor**

"After graduation, I will be joining SC Johnson for their R&D Early Career Development Program in Racine, WI starting in August. This is a 3-year program with 3 year-long rotations in various departments across R&D. For the summer, I will be traveling to Italy and enjoying my time off."



**VISALAKSHI MURUGESAN, Tutor Coordinator**

"I believe that as a landscape architect and planner, I can create experiences that will make an impact. I would like to work with communities in creating immersive spaces through sustainable practices as a model for environmental stewardship, promoting ecological resilience and enhancing the quality of life for both people and the planet. I hope to create design prototypes that can be implemented in Cities and present my thesis on various platforms and publish. Being a part of the landscape architecture community, every day is a discovery. I am being introduced to new concepts, ideas, and challenges and I am excited to see what the future holds for me."



**KAYLA BANH, Tutor**

"After graduation, I will be pursuing a Master's program in accounting (MAS)."

**IDEAL RAFUNA, Tutor**

"I'm Ideal Rafuna from Kosovo, about to graduate with a Master's in Aerospace Engineering. Alongside my studies, I started a venture called Albanian Roots - AR. After graduation, I'll be working as a Mechanical Engineer but will keep pushing my startup forward. Excited for what's next and can't wait to share more with you all!"



**MICHAEL KALDAS, Tutor**

"I still don't have plans for after graduation but I am applying left right and center to jobs. I am looking for a job in process engineering in the oil and gas industry."

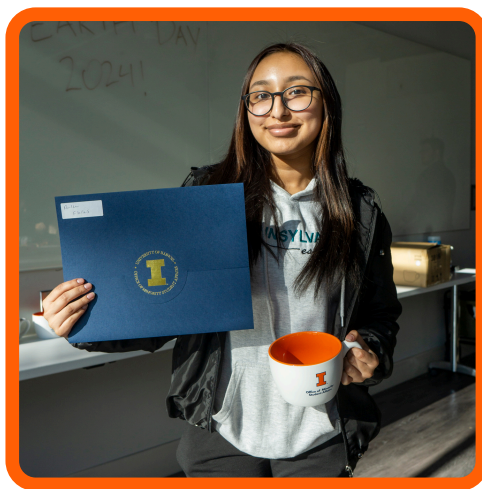




## THE OMSA AMBASSADORS: WELCOMING OUR NEWEST MEMBERS!

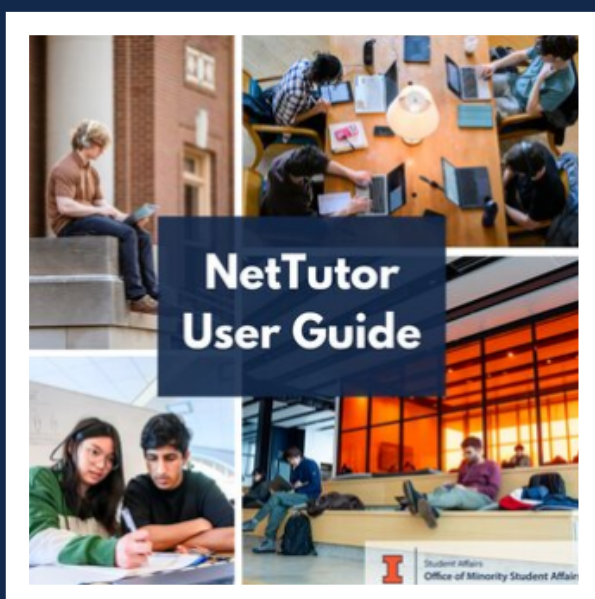
The OMSA was thrilled to welcome our latest cohort of OMSA Ambassadors at our **Spring 2024 Ambassador Retreat!** Our **13** newest members and current Ambassadors spent the day engaging in training and teambuilding exercises to build camaraderie, plan for the academic year, and enjoy some friendly rivalry through a heated game of Taboo!

The Ambassadors also enjoyed an **End of the Year Celebration** to formally commemorate the accomplishments and dedication the team demonstrated throughout the academic year! Our graduating Seniors were highlighted and several of our long-standing Ambassadors were honored with the “Ambassador Excellence Award” during the celebration.



CONGRATULATIONS ONCE AGAIN TO OUR LATEST  
AMBASSADOR COHORT & GRADUATING SENIORS!





## NETTUTOR

1:1 Online Tutoring, Available 24/7

The OMSA is thrilled to now offer **FREE** 1:1 online tutoring available **24 hours a day, 7 days a week** through a partnership with NetTutor®.

NetTutor provides professionally-trained, degree holding tutors across a variety of key disciplines and hundreds of available courses. Tutors are trained to provide a welcoming, accessible virtual environment to help students become independent learners at their own pace.

After class, at night, or when learning centers are closed, NetTutor is available to provide that extra support and get students connected when they need it most.

**Learn more and log in using your Illinois credentials at:**

**[go.illinois.edu/omsanettutor](https://go.illinois.edu/omsanettutor)**



# OMSA SCHOLARSHIPS: GIVE TODAY!

OMSA students are disproportionately represented among borrowers and students with unmet financial need. Please help provide scholarships our deserving students by giving a tax-deductible gift. Visit [www.omsa.illinois.edu/give](http://www.omsa.illinois.edu/give) and contribute today.

Join us in supporting the **Diane and Ann Moore Scholarship**, dedicated to breaking down societal barriers through education. Drawing inspiration from her mother, Ann Moore, whose formal schooling was cut short by the harsh realities of sharecropping, Officer Diane Moore's unwavering dedication to justice and equitable education is the driving force behind this scholarship. Officer Moore's passion for education lives on through her commitment to provide underrepresented students with the resources necessary to achieve success.

**Goal:**  
**\$25,000**



Our second scholarship fund 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.

**Goal:**  
**\$25,000**



Our goal is to reach the \$25,000 endowment level this school year! Once endowed at the \$25,000 level, OMSA we'll be able to offer deserving students a **\$1000 scholarship annually!** Please consider contributing to the OMSA Scholarship legacy and donate today!





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*Giving Tuesday*

Always thankful.  
Forever grateful.



Support OMSA Students at:  
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