



*We're Focused on Your Future!*

Otero College  
President's Report  
January 2022  
Timothy Alvarez, Ph.D.

## **Transform the Student Experience**

**The Otero College campus** was shining bright for the Annual Ag Gala on New Year's Eve! The night was filled with a beef brisket dinner, live country music by Country Gold, dancing, cash bar, door prizes, and live and silent auctions. With the help of 35 sponsors and the numerous donated auction items, the Otero Agricultural Science Program and Foundation were able to raise just over \$16,100 for the Agriculture Scholarships, making this the largest fundraiser yet!

According to the head of the Ag Program, Brooke Matthew, "The Campus was bright on New Year's as friends, neighbors, colleagues and family rang in the 2022 year. The Otero Foundation and the Agriculture Program would like to thank all the amazing sponsors and donors that made the night possible. The fund raised that evening go directly to agriculture scholarships to students."

The 2021-2022 Ag Scholars include: (front row) Cord Proctor, Jacob Groves, Eugene Jackson, (back row) Ashley Martin, and Emily Nelson.



## Create Education without Barriers through Transformational Partnerships

**Otero Dance Studio**, formerly known as the OJC Dance Studio, celebrated 40 years of dance on Dec. 17 and 18 in the Ed Stafford Theatre.

The founder, Darlene Blackford, started the program back in 1981 when she saw a need for dance in the community. With amazing support from Otero Junior College, now Otero College, and the community, the dance program grew and offered more and more classes through the years to become more than just an after-school dance program.



**Otero College's NTSO** (Non-Traditional Student Organization), RCW (Renegade Championship Wrestling) and Core Civic (Crowley County Correctional Facility) teamed up for the first time to provide seven families, including 20 children, presents for Christmas.

The group was able to obtain a list of children who might have not had gifts or are living with foster families from Otero County. The wish lists of each child were placed on angels to be filled by sponsors. Gifts were collected, wrapped by NTSO members and volunteers, then distributed to social services Dec. 20. Two of these families were able to enjoy cookies, juice and opening of gifts at Otero College on the afternoon of Dec. 17

According to Jimmy Gribble, representing both RCW and Core Civic, "This came together nicely on a short time frame. The angels that were sent to Core Civic didn't last 30 minutes on the tree. Let's do this again and make it even bigger!"



**The 66th Otero Arts Festival** is pleased to announce the 2022 contest categories and dates. The annual festival plans to host the public viewing of the visual arts and creative writing from Tuesday, March 29 through Thursday, March 31 in the McDivitt Center Gym on the Otero College campus. Area students' grade 7-12 will be able to compete in several categories: Visual Arts, Creative Writing, Music and Theatrical Contests. Ribbons will be awarded at each level of the competition with Otero Scholarships being awarded to the top senior (grade 12 graduating high school senior) competitor in each category.

The Otero Arts Festival showcases creative writing, the visual arts, musicians and theatrical performances by middle and high school students from throughout southeast Colorado. The Otero Arts Festival invites area students, grades 7-12, to share what inspires them to make their imagination come to life in either their creative writings, visual arts, music or through the theatrical competition. All students are encouraged to enter. Students do not have to be currently participating in art, band, choir or drama at their schools to enter. Debbie Phillips, coordinator of the Otero Arts Festival, anticipates about 30 area schools will have students participate in the 66<sup>th</sup> annual event.

## **Transform Our Own Workforce Experience**

**On Tuesday Dec. 14, Otero College held its annual all staff holiday party.** Each year during December, employees of Otero College embrace the spirit of giving by pooling their resources in support of a silent auction. This year, the proceeds from the auction were designated to the campus Food Pantry organized by Kimi Kelley, English instructor at Otero College. She opened the food pantry several years ago in the hallway of the Humanities building for students who are in need. It is anonymous and available for all. It has grown to reach several other buildings and now includes refrigerated foods. Kimi was also awarded the Otero Heart Award because of her kind and generous nature.

**Otero has several new employees** as of January this year.

Monica Martinez was selected as the Case Manager for the AIM Grant. Monica is an Otero Alumni and received her Bachelor of Science through National American University and a diploma for paralegal studies through the Center for Legal Studies at the University of Southern Colorado. She most recently worked as the Administrative Assistant for TRiO Student Support Services where she has strong customer service skills and developed great relationships with students. Monica has a passion for supporting students and is exciting to move into her new role.

Misty Freidenberger was selected as Custodian I. Misty attended Cheraw High School and took classes through Otero College. She most recently worked at Otero College as a temporary, part-time Custodian. Misty has many years of experience in housekeeping

and custodian duties in her previous roles prior to joining Otero. She loves the people she works with and the work she does.

Alejandro Medina joined Otero as a new Custodian I. Alejandro graduated from La Junta High School in 2004. He most recently worked at Employer's Edge where he was a Claims Specialist. Alejandro also has experience with custodian and groundskeeper duties. His experience and willingness to work with others make him a great fit for his new position.

Jane Wheeler is the new COSI Finish What You Started Student Success Coordinator. Jane earned her Bachelor of Science in Urban and Regional Planning and minor in Economics from Oklahoma State University. She most recently worked as a Case Manager at the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless. Jane has strong interpersonal skills, experience guiding diverse individuals to reach goals, and is passionate about education.

Megan McDaniel joined Otero as a new Nursing Faculty. Megan earned her Bachelor of Arts in Biology and Health Science in 2001 from Asbury College and her Bachelor of Science in Nursing in 2002 from the University of Kentucky. She has worked as a registered nurse on the Medical and Surgical floor at Norton Children's Hospital for the past 19 years. Megan has extensive experience educating patients and their families in the medical field and has taught English as a second language to diverse populations from various cultures and countries in the world. Megan has a passion for helping people and is enthusiastic about working with students in the Nursing Program.

Caitlyn Dieckmann was selected as the new Academic Advisor for the AIM Grant. Caitlyn attended Otero College and continued her education at the University of Colorado Colorado Springs (UCCS) earning her Bachelor of Art in Psychology and Political Science in 2020. She supported professors and instructors in teaching freshman introductory courses and advised and guided freshman students in their first semester as a Gateway Program Seminar Peer Leader at UCCS. She was also an Editor at the Scribe News at UCCS since 2019. Caitlyn enjoys working with students to prepare them for their college journey.