



*We're Focused on Your Future!*

Otero College  
President's Report  
August 2023  
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### **Transform the Student Experience**

**On August 17 and 18 Otero College hosted Move-In Weekend** for students staying in the residence halls. There was a resource fair for them to stop at booths and learn about all the services provided by Otero.

The semester officially began on August 21 and courses are now in full swing. The first day of the semester was a day of orientation for all students. There were different programs held for both freshmen and sophomores to help maximize their time and get them the information they needed individually.

Some of the Welcome Week events that took place were participation in the Arkansas Valley Fair Parade where students and staff handed out candy, stickers, and sports schedules to the community. A Welcome Back BBQ that was held the Sunday before classes for students, parents, and employees of Otero as a meet and greet, a Back to School Bash, the unrivaled favorite "Zombies vs. Humans", and several tutorial trainings and information tables were available.



**Otero College's emphasis for 2022-23 was "Year of Community"**. The Cosmetology and Barbering programs successfully brought this focus to life. Under the guidance of instructors Monica Valdez and David Eckhart, students collaborated with five different community organizations. Their services ranged from scalp massages to manicures, allowing them to engage with the Lower Arkansas Valley communities in a more significant way.

This year, the Otero students were exposed to hands-on, real-world scenarios through various work-based learning opportunities, which offers practical experience, bridges the gap between theory and practice, enhances skills, and increases knowledge of career opportunities within the cosmetology and barbering fields. The students were able to utilize their skills with multiple different community partners.

The Southeast Health Group staff had the opportunity to enjoy scalp massages. Over 40 massages were performed, providing the students with valuable experience, and leaving the staff feeling relaxed. Cosmo students also worked with the local dance production of "Crown" to offer creative hair styling services for their performances. Grey scale makeup services were supplied for the La Junta Jr./Sr. High School performance of "Diary of Anne Frank" and haircuts were offered to the students in the Las Animas School District for their prom. The college students also worked with the residents at Pioneer Health Care Center, where they provided manicure and facial services.



**Additionally, our Law Enforcement Training Academy (Otero LETA)** has emerged as an invaluable resource for our community, dedicated to fostering a safer and more secure environment. Over the past year, Otero LETA has not only provided exceptional law enforcement training to aspiring officers but has also made significant contributions to the local community through a range of engaging activities.

One of the standout achievements of Otero LETA in the past year has been the successful hosting of a regional two-day in-service training for local law enforcement agencies. This comprehensive training program encompassed vital aspects such as arrest control, driving, and firearms training, equipping officers with crucial skills necessary to uphold public safety. The event was a success with 16 agencies participating, highlighting Otero LETA's commitment to enhancing the capabilities of law enforcement agencies in the region.

In addition to in-service training, Otero LETA has gone above and beyond to contribute to the overall professional growth of law enforcement personnel. Utilizing cutting-edge technology, Otero LETA introduced Virtual Reality Training to simulate real-life scenarios and enhance decision-making abilities among law enforcement officers.

Beyond law enforcement training, Otero LETA actively engages with the local community through various events. One notable example is the self-defense sessions the academy's dedicated students provide throughout the year. Open to the public, these sessions empower community members with the knowledge and skills to protect themselves and enhance personal safety.

Furthermore, Otero LETA students actively participate in Otero College campus functions and local community events, like the Community Halloween Party. Otero LETA students remain actively involved, creating a stronger, safer, and more supportive community.



## Create Education without Barriers through Transformational Partnerships

The **BUENO High School Equivalency Program** held its 37<sup>th</sup> graduation ceremony on Thursday, August 24<sup>th</sup> at The Fairway restaurant in La Junta. They had ten graduates, however, only four were able to attend the ceremony. Otero has hosted the BUENO HEP program, that is run by Colorado University on campus for several years. Otero often is then able to recruit students who pass through this program into our courses and help the students with an easy transition. This year, one student has already registered for Cosmetology courses.



**On July 17, Otero College** held a pinning ceremony for five new Phlebotomy Technicians in the Life Sciences building on the Otero Campus.

Otero College's Phlebotomy certificate program is designed to prepare qualified phlebotomists for entry level employment. The classes are taken over two semesters with a total of six credits. Phlebotomy Technicians serve a vital role in the field of medicine, they learn how to properly draw and process blood and body fluids. They also learn the skills to be safe and accurate to provide doctors with the necessary laboratory results for diagnosis and treatment.

In the state of Colorado, Otero College is the sole institution with a National Accrediting Agency for Clinical Laboratory Sciences (NAACLS) accredited phlebotomy program. This year, the phlebotomy technician certificate was paid for through the Care Forward Colorado Grant. This funding is made possible by Senate Bill 22-226, which dedicates \$26 million in state recovery dollars to train healthcare workers across Colorado. After obtaining this certificate, students commonly pursue a Medical Laboratory Technician Degree which is also offered through Otero College.

Through the Care Forward Colorado grant we were able to pay for over \$100,000 of expenses for students in Otero College's Nurses Assistant, Emergency Medical Technician, and Phlebotomy courses over the last year! These students completed their programs and graduated with ZERO costs to them.



**Otero has recently launched partnerships** with Parker Dewey and Forage, two companies that provide students the opportunity to gain real-world experience.

Parker Dewey is a company that hosts micro-internships, which are short-term, paid, project-centered experiences, where students can demonstrate their skills, explore career paths, and expand their professional network. Unlike a traditional internship, these paid opportunities typically range from 10 to 40 hours of work and are deadline-driven as opposed to set during specific hours – perfect for students with erratic or hectic schedules. This site allows employers to stand up projects that are important but that their employees do not have time to do or are often put off.

With Forage, students can build their employability, and experience what it's like to work at a range of world-leading companies virtually. They are able to get a taste of industry experience by completing short, real world, company-backed online projects provided through Forage. The experiences are free of charge for the students and are created by world-leading companies, like JPMorgan Chase, Citi, General Electric and many more. Students do not have to submit applications or go through interview processes to get these projects and by completing these virtual experience programs, they'll build the practical skills that these employers are looking for, receive a personalized certificate of completion, and are able to share the experience on their resume and LinkedIn profile. When students go on to apply for internships or full-time roles, their virtual experience is a fantastic way to stand out.

Otero aims to go above and beyond traditional academic pursuits, ensuring that students are equipped with a comprehensive skill set that goes beyond theoretical knowledge. By actively seeking and fostering collaborations with industry-leading professionals through Parker Dewey and Forage, Vanhook and Otero strive to expose students to real-world scenarios, enabling them to gain hands-on experience in their fields of interest. One of Otero's goals is to cultivate well-rounded individuals that will undoubtedly leave a lasting impression on potential employers and contribute to shaping a future generation of accomplished professionals.

### **Transform Our Own Workforce Experience**

Otero has been very fortunate to hire several new staff and faculty members during the summer.

- Kimberly Zant                      President
- Andee Leininger                  Financial Aid Director
- Malorie Weiss                      Recruitment and Community Outreach Coordinator
- Jack Waring                        Tutoring Services Coordinator
- Trevor Herasingh                 Construction Trades Instructor
- Brooklyn Waddles                Assistant Softball Coach
- Heather Pidcock-Reed            English Faculty
- Stephen Matthews                Marketing and Communications Coordinator
- Lindsey Dearborn                Agriculture Science Faculty
- McKensie Avens                 Assistant Director of Financial Aid
- Tim Bowlen                         Assistant Men's Basketball Coach
- Jada Walton                        Assistant Women's Basketball Coach
- Molly Borton                        Mental Health Counselor