



*We're Focused on Your Future!*

Otero College  
President's Report  
March 2025  
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### **Economic Mobility**

Otero College hosted a Certified Nurse Aide (CNA) pinning on March 13<sup>th</sup>. Three students were pinned in a very meaningful ceremony.

By obtaining a CNA certification, individuals gain the skills and credentials necessary to secure positions in various healthcare settings, such as hospitals, nursing homes, and home health agencies. For those with limited education or work experience, the relatively short and affordable training program that Otero offers serves as an important first step toward meaningful employment, helping them establish a foothold in a growing field.

Moreover, the CNA certification acts as a gateway to further career advancement within the healthcare industry. Many CNAs go on to pursue additional training, ultimately advancing to roles like Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) or Registered Nurse (RN), both of which offer higher wages and greater job security. As a result, this certification not only enhances individuals' immediate earning potential but also helps them build a sustainable career path.

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### **Education for All**

On Saturday, March 8<sup>th</sup>, the Otero College Agriculture Department held its annual scholarship fundraising event. This year's theme was "A Night at the Races." You may remember that we previously held the Ag Gala on New Year's Eve, but the event has evolved to meet the ever-changing needs of our community, students, and employees.

The event was highly successful. Faculty members from the agriculture department

organized and hosted previously recorded horse races, allowing guests to place mock bets on their selected horses. The kit provided play money for betting, ensuring that no real gambling occurred.

Additionally, they raised (real) money by hosting a live and silent auction, with items such as a handmade, one-of-a-kind, belt buckle for the occasion. They served dinner and there was a dance floor available. All funds raised will go toward agriculture student scholarships in the coming semester.



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Otero College organized a transfer fair on campus on March 6<sup>th</sup>, inviting current students to explore opportunities for transferring to four-year universities. It provided a valuable chance for students to discover nearby institutions and consider advancing their education toward a bachelor's degree.

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Otero also hosted the Arkansas Valley Music League's Junior High Honor Choir and the High School Honor Band. More than 80 students spent one day practicing for a concert that was held the same evening in the Ed Stafford Theatre on the Otero College campus. The Arkansas Valley Music Educators League produces this event once a year for students to showcase their talents with other student musicians from around the valley. They also host a flipped event for Jr. High Honor Band and High School Honor Choir in the fall.

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### **Empowered Talent**

On March 3, 2025, Lisa Monaco began her role as Coordinator of Testing and Dual Enrollment. We are very excited to have her onboard. She will not only help students test on campus, but will be in our local schools providing a much-needed liaison

between the college and high school aged students. She will help with concurrent needs as well as the transition to college upon graduation.

We were also very fortunate to hire Eva Rodriguez on a part-time basis as a Spanish Instructor. She began this semester and will continue to teach at La Junta High School, further strengthening our partnership with them.

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### **Partner of Choice**

On Saturday, March 1, Otero College hosted the 26<sup>th</sup> annual Girls in the Middle Conference. They had 152 middle school aged students from 20 different schools in Southeastern Colorado attend. This year's theme was "Dreams Take Flight" and was an amazing day for all involved.

The keynote speaker was Margaret Koch, MSN RN, an Emergency Department Trauma Educator at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital and Jefferson Methodist Hospital in Philadelphia Pennsylvania. She was born in La Junta and raised in Cheraw, ten miles north of La Junta. She attended the first Girls in the Middle conference. She was excited to return home to show the girls she is proof that you can do anything you set your mind to.

Interactive workshops gave students glimpses into careers they might not have thought were possible for them. Presenters taught girls how to solder, "Stop the Bleed", identify native and not native animals, examine patients, learn about animal pelts, and more. There were 35 presenters who led 16 different workshops in the morning to introduce the girls to their specific careers. Each career requires an educational background in science, technology, engineering, arts, or math.

The team leaders led the girls through an Escape Room Challenge, where they had to use math, science, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills to get the "key" to get out. A great day was had by all.



On March 12, Otero hosted a community workshop to discuss La Junta's Outdoor Recreation and Community Action Plan. This two-day event was a key part of Colorado's Rural Technical Assistance Program (RTAP), which helps rural communities plan and grow their outdoor recreation economy. The workshop gave local residents and community members a chance to come together and share their ideas about the future of outdoor recreation in La Junta.

During the event, participants helped shape the vision for La Junta's outdoor recreation by discussing important values and setting goals for the future. Their input was essential in guiding the direction of the community's recreation plans, ensuring it reflects what matters most to the people who live here. The workshop was a great opportunity to get involved and help create a lasting impact.

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### **Power of 13**

On February 20, representatives from Otero College, including the Construction Instructor, two students, the Director of CTE and Workforce Development, as well as the Vice President of Administration and Business, Vice President of Academic Affairs, and the President, attended the AG's COPERR Summit in Pueblo, CO. Otero is in the final stages of the pilot project, and is currently applying for Phase 2 funding, which would enable us to expand. During the summit, the Otero representatives had the opportunity to meet with the Attorney General, Phil Weiser, and individuals from several other post-secondary institutions participating in COPERR.

