



THE PILLAR

A MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE TRIO SSS COMMUNITY

"Helping Students Realize Their Full Potential"



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Look for the bits of beauty in every day. That is where the magic happens.

Mission Statement

The University of Colorado Denver TRIO Student Support Services Program is a holistic student development program that is dedicated to helping each student reach his or her full academic potential.

TRIO Explorer—Chanelle Jones Ahmed



The TRIO Student Support Services program is happy to spotlight Chanelle Jones Ahmed as a TRIO Explorer. She traveled to Cuba from January 7th to January 19th. Chanelle is working to complete her BSBA degree in Marketing with a Minor in Digital Design and Certificate in Digital Studies. She has been an active participant in the program. She works hard to manage her academics, work, and personal responsibilities.



When asked about her experience Chanelle noted, "This was my first international trip and the longest I have ever been on! Cuba's culture felt warm and full of love. You could feel it in the interactions, living in the homes with families, learning what Cubans listen to, discovering their daily routines, and understanding their perspectives." She described the atmosphere as lively; people loved being outside, enjoying the weather, walking, and spending time in communal spaces. She shared, "Most people in Cuba spoke Spanish, but occasionally, I would meet someone who knew a bit of English. What stood out the most was the country's sense of hustle, perseverance, presence, and intentionality."



Chanelle mentioned several favorite items during her journey. She shared that her favorite food was Croquettes. She tried so many of them that she felt she needed to come home and find a recipe immediately. Her favorite experience was when her group was walking to a live dance club and a group of Cubans with a speaker started playing, "Not Like Us" by Kendrick Lamar as they passed by. She mentioned that it was hilarious because, as Americans, it felt humbling to see our culture reflected on us in such an unexpected way.

Chanelle was asked what the biggest thing she learned about herself from this study abroad experience. She noted, "What I learned was the importance of being okay with slowing down and embracing the present moment. In Cuba, everything moved slowly, and I mean everything. There was a lot of waiting, which taught me patience. I learned to be patient with myself, patient with others, and truly present. Sometimes, we move so fast that we forget to appreciate what we have and how privileged we are. This trip reminded me to continue to be grateful."

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE...

TRIO Explorer—Continued



She would encourage other TRIO SSS participants to study abroad. She stated, "I would encourage you to focus on the experience and the opportunity to grow. Studying abroad might seem costly but having a game plan makes it achievable. If you find a program you are interested in, look at the costs ahead of time and start saving. Do not let money be a barrier to a life-changing experience." Another reason to travel is the friendships you will make. She met people whose career interests and hobbies aligned with hers and has kept in touch ever since. Her last note on studying abroad is that you have a chance for personal growth. It was her first time traveling internationally and it exposed her too so much (culturally, mentally, and

emotionally). This experience also broadened her horizon and made her realize that college is not just about lectures. There are opportunities to travel and learn in ways that can transform your perspective.

Chanelle also noted that her study abroad experience did push her to grow in areas where she struggled. During the beginning of the experience, she was very observant and kept to herself in the initial days of the trip. She learned that it is okay to set boundaries, take time to recharge, balance social and mental health especially on long trips. It is also important to have fun and treat it as an adventure. She noted, "Step out of your comfort zone, try new things, and bring back stories to share. This journey taught me to embrace the unknown and allowed me to create memories I will cherish forever."

If you are interested in studying abroad, please visit with an advisor from the CU Denver Office of Global Education | Study Abroad! You can visit their website [here](#). Click "Get Started" and then "How to Apply" to schedule your first-time appointment.

New Peer Mentor—Daniel Kim



Hi! I'm Daniel. I'm currently a junior majoring in Computer Science with a minor in Information Systems at the University of Colorado Denver. I have a passion for coding, creating, and learning. I'm motivated to earn my degree because I want to pursue a career as a full-stack developer. My goal is to one day use technology to create a positive impact on the world.

My academic goal is to develop a strong understanding in software development while gaining hands-on experience through research, projects, and community involvement. What motivates me the most is my family's support- it's what keeps me going in all things. I want to make them proud and help open doors for others who come from similar backgrounds.

In my free time, I enjoy working out, playing video games, and building personal projects. I'm also a member of the Engineering Learning Community, where I've had the opportunity to grow alongside other motivated students.

My favorite quote is: "From failing, you learn. Success? Not so much." - Aunt Billie from *Meet The Robinsons*. This is my favorite quote because it reminds me that failure is a part of growth. You shouldn't be discouraged, but rather see it as a chance to improve and learn.

Daniel Kim | TRIO SSS Peer Mentor

New Peer Mentor—Kalkidan Astatike



Hello!

I am Kalkidan Astatike, the new TRIO SSS Peer Mentor. I am a 4th-year student majoring in Biochemistry and minoring in Biology on the Pre-medicine track with the goal of entering the medical field and becoming a surgeon. I have been working with students as a Learning Assistant, Research assistant, and Grader since my second year, and I love working with students. I am originally from Ethiopia, and Amharic is my mother tongue. I came to the United States in 2018 and have been here since then.

Outside of school, I love spending time with my siblings and reading books about human nature, neuroscience, and money. My favorite quote is, “You can’t ever reach perfection, but you can believe in asymptote toward which you are ceaselessly striving”—When Breath Becomes Air by Paul Kalanithi, Neurosurgeon-Neuroscientist. I love this quote because it reminds me to always try my best and strive to get better while acknowledging that perfection is not something reachable.

I look forward to working with all of you!

Kalkidan Astatike | TRIO SSS Peer Mentor

April Wordsearch

I	O	S	R	A	I	N	D	R	O	P	S	A	F
T	U	O	R	P	S	S	S	D	R	I	B	R	P
I	I	D	T	S	P	Y	G	P	I	C	N	I	C
P	D	R	G	I	D	S	G	A	R	D	E	N	G
W	D	O	L	M	B	U	T	T	E	R	F	L	Y
W	W	U	P	O	N	S	G	A	P	T	N	Y	S
A	T	G	B	U	N	N	Y	B	A	P	R	A	R
P	T	S	S	L	I	D	O	F	F	A	D	D	E
R	E	O	A	R	N	P	U	D	D	L	E	H	W
I	Y	Y	P	F	G	S	M	O	O	L	B	T	O
L	Y	S	O	I	T	R	I	G	R	O	W	R	L
U	D	R	I	Y	M	E	A	L	O	R	G	A	F
P	I	B	S	A	N	B	A	S	D	I	S	E	D
U	T	N	R	B	D	S	M	O	S	S	O	L	B

WORD BANK

APRIL
BIRDS
BLOOM
BLOSSOM
BUNNY
BUTTERFLY
DAFFODILS
DAISY
EARTH DAY
FLOWERS
GARDEN
GRASS
GROW
PICNIC
PUDDLE
RAINDROPS
SPRING
TULIPS

TRIO Student Spotlight—Eduardo Pimentel



The TRIO Student Support Services program is happy to spotlight Eduardo Pimentel. He has been an active member of the program since the fall 2021 semester. He will be graduating this semester with a Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Science. One of his favorite quotes is “Slow and steady wins the race” from Aesop’s fable about the tortoise and the hare. He noted his mom used to say this when they lived in Mexico and still says it now that they live in the United States. This quote resonates with Eduardo because it reminds him of the obstacles he has faced in his education. He mentioned that he barely passed grades one through six and mostly earned Cs in middle and high school. He earned a mix of Cs and Bs at the community college. Now at CU Denver, he sometimes earns As. It took him a long time to get here but he has been consistent in his own way. He shared, “I am not the best or the worst student, but I am proud of how far I have come despite everything. Some people do it faster, but I am grateful for my determination and my parents’ support. This quote shows that I can keep going, even if my pace is slower than others, and I will eventually reach my goals.”

When asked about his college experience Eduardo shared, “College has felt like a roller coaster.” He started at Front Range Community College in 2017 and graduated in 2021 with an Associate of Science degree. In the beginning, he struggled a lot and failed several classes, ended up on probation, and had to sit out for a semester. He noted that the conversation with his parents was difficult. They agreed that if he was suspended again, he would drop out. When he returned to school, his professor mentioned the TRIO program and he decided to check it out. He

realized the program could offer him the guidance he needed especially because he was the first person in his family to attend any form of higher education. TRIO guided him to earn his degree, and he transferred to CU Denver in 2021. He faced both new and old challenges, but he was more prepared because he had learned to email the right people and not let problems overwhelm him. Eduardo shared that every semester brought something unexpected, yet these ups and downs helped him stay organized and to believe in himself.

His biggest challenge in college was finding the strength and determination to earn his Associate of Science degree. He mentioned that he almost did not earn it because he struggled in the early semesters and was suspended. His English was also very rough, so he had to re-learn basic material while adjusting to college life. He notes that he has never been a top student. He was usually a “C” student, but he worked his way up to “B” grades. At the end of this semester, he will reach a goal he set back in 2017 to earn his bachelor’s degree in computer science. He is the first person in his family to do this and it means a lot to everyone.

When asked about one thing he wished he knew when he started college Eduardo stated, “I wish someone had told me that there is always help if you are willing to look for it. I learned that when I was suspended from community college and discovered TRIO, which got me back on track. It helped me earn my associate degree and later guided me to CU Denver.” Eduardo also shared that he used to be too shy to ask for help because he thought he did not need it but asking for help changed his life in many ways. You never know when you will need support or when someone else might need yours, so do not be afraid to reach out.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE...

Spotlight Continued—Eduardo Pimentel



When asked how the TRIO SSS program has helped him, he noted "TRIO has changed my life because it gave me the support and direction I needed to manage college, which was brand new to me and my family. It helped me succeed at community college, and it also helped me from my first day at CU Denver. I learned how to stay informed about every detail of school, and I have been able to share this knowledge with my brother who is also attending community college. His advice for other TRIO participants is to ask for help as soon as you see a problem. Waiting too long can make things harder, and it can also add extra stress. If you reach out early, you can at least know you have done your part to solve the issue."

One of his favorite memories in college happened during his last semester at community college when the TRIO program provided tickets to the Denver Museum of Nature and Science. He shared, "It felt like a field trip. I had only been there once before in 2011 when I was in middle school, and I could barely understand the exhibit descriptions then because my English was not very good. Going back after 10 years was exciting because this time, I could read everything." Going back reminded him how much he has improved since then.

His short-term goal includes finishing the semester strong so that he can graduate without any issues. He would also like to take his family to the casinos in the mountains near Denver because they have always wanted to go for the experience as well as trying out a buffet. He mentioned that his family has never had the chance or the money to do that. His long-term goal includes finding a job so he can help his parents pay off their house and to support his brother with his education. He would also like to repair his mom's car and save money to fix his parent's home in Mexico. Someday, his parents hope to move back there.

Eduardo's hobbies include watching soccer. His favorite team from Mexico is Cruz Azul. He also mentioned that he likes playing board games with his family and friends, playing video games, watching wrestling, and watching movies/TV. He tends to watch more horror, sci-fi, and fantasy movies. Eduardo enjoys working with computers and trying out new technology. He also likes reading fiction, watching anime, and reading manga. He believes that his hobbies and interests help him stay relaxed and motivated. If Eduardo won a million dollars, he would first pay off his parent's mortgage and fix their home in Mexico. He noted that it is old and has been falling apart for years. His parents worked in the United States since the early 1990s to give him a better life and they have always put him first. He would like to do the same for them and repay the kindness they have shown him. We wish Eduardo continued success in his academic and personal endeavors. YOU DID IT!

END OF YEAR
Celebration

SAVE THE DATE

TRIO participants and families are invited to celebrate your accomplishments of the year, enjoy dinner together, and recognize graduates. More information to come!

Thursday, May 1st | 5:00 pm - 7:00 pm



RECIPE—Pineapple BBQ Baked Chicken Foil Packets

INGREDIENTS

For Foil Packs

- ◇ 4 skinless, boneless chicken breasts
- ◇ 2 cups fresh pineapple chunks
- ◇ 1 red bell pepper, diced
- ◇ 1 green bell pepper, diced
- ◇ Coarse salt and fresh cracked black pepper, to taste

For Sauce

- ◇ 1/2 cup of your favorite prepared BBQ sauce
- ◇ 3 clove garlic, minced (or 2 teaspoons dried garlic)
- ◇ 1 1/2 teaspoon smoked paprika
- ◇ 2 tablespoons olive oil
- ◇ 1 jalapeño, sliced
- ◇ 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- ◇ 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- ◇ Chopped cilantro, to taste



Yield: 4 SERVINGS | Prep Time: 10 MIN | Cook time: 35 MIN

DIRECTIONS

1. To make the baked chicken foil packets: Pre-heat your oven to 350°F (180°C). Lay four 12×12 inch (30×30 cm) squares of foil out on your work surface. Place pineapple chunks, and bell peppers in the middle of each piece of foil. Season with salt and pepper, then top with each chicken breast. Season chicken with salt and pepper generously.
2. In a bowl, combine BBQ sauce, olive oil, paprika, minced garlic, lemon juice, oregano, cilantro, and jalapeño. Divide the sauce over each chicken pack and sprinkle with additional chopped cilantro.
3. Fold the foil over the chicken and vegetables to close off the pack, pinch the ends together so the pack stays closed.
4. Transfer the chicken foil packs to a baking sheet and bake for 35-40 minutes or until chicken is cooked through and veggies are tender. When chicken is done, carefully open the foil packs, drizzle with more sauce and broil for 1 or 2 minutes to crisp up the chicken.
5. Serve the baked chicken foil packets immediately, garnished with more cilantro. Enjoy!

Note: If your chicken breasts are too thick, just cut lengthwise to make fillets, they will cook faster.

For more information and nutrition facts, please visit the website below:
<https://www.eatwell101.com/chicken-foil-packets-in-oven-recipe>

April Workshop Calendar

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
	1 MISTAKES ARE PROOF THAT YOU ARE TRYING, LEARNING, AND GROWING.	2 	3 ✦ TINY STEPS STILL COUNT AS PROGRESS ✦	4 ² Coping w/Stress Using Art: Painting 9:00 am—10:30 am SC, Suite 2000 
7 	8 ¹ Good Vibes: Wellness and Stress Management 11:30 am—12:15 pm In-Person  Learning Commons	9 ¹ Good Vibes: Wellness and Stress Management 11:00 am—11:45 am Zoom 	10 ² Budget Basics: 3:00 pm—4:00 pm In-Person  SC, Suite 2000	11 ² Manage Academic and Life Stress 11:00 am—12:00 am Zoom 
14 ² What's Your Learning Style? 2:00 pm—3:00 pm Zoom 	15 ¹ Final Exam Prep 11:30 am—12:15 pm In-Person  Learning Commons	16 ¹ Final Exam Prep 11:30 am—12:15 pm In-Person  Zoom	17 ² Job Search Basics 10:00 am—11:00 am In-Person  SC, Suite 2000	18 
21 Focus on <i>progress</i> not perfection	22 ³ Getting Ahead on Student Loan Repayment 4:00 pm—5:00 pm Zoom 	23 ² Graduate School Preparation 10:30 am—11:30 am In-Person  SC, Suite 2000	24 ² Organization: Getting it Together 1:00 pm—2:00 pm Zoom 	25 
28 ² Procrastination: Now or Later? 12:00 pm—1:00 pm In-Person  SC, Suite 2000	29 	30 YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE GREAT TO GET STARTED, BUT YOU HAVE TO GET STARTED TO BE GREAT — LES BROWN		

Legend for In-Person and Zoom Sessions

IN-PERSON 

ZOOM 

Workshop Registration

REGISTRATION REQUIRED—Non-TRIO workshops are subject to change.

¹Learning Resource Center Workshops: [Registration Required: RSVP: HERE](#)

²TRIO SSS Skill Building Workshops: [Registration Required: RSVP: HERE](#)

³Wellness Center Financial Wellness Workshop: [Registration Required: RSVP: HERE](#)

**REGISTER
NOW!**

Online Workshop Evaluation

To receive credit for attending Skill-Building Workshops and Financial Literacy Sessions be sure to fill out a TRIO SSS Workshop Evaluation. You can pick up an evaluation form in the TRIO Office, or complete the online evaluation at:

<https://forms.office.com/r/LBReKhGpSY>.