



*We're Focused on Your Future!*

Otero College  
President's Report  
January 2024  
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### Transform the Student Experience

**Otero Rodeo's** Liesl Chenowith (Bayfield, CO) emerged victorious in the 2024 National Western Stock Show Horseman's Collegiate Challenge. For the third year in a row, an Otero student has won or placed in the challenge.

The Collegiate Challenge was created to engage local college equestrian programs and offer additional scholarship opportunities to student-athletes. Six, Colorado, and Wyoming higher education equine programs each selected two representatives to compete on January 16 and 17 in the CINCH Arena in the Events Center.

Established in 2018, the Horseman's Challenge offers a chance for equestrians from across the country to participate in a dynamic sport while also providing them with a stimulating, instructive, and enjoyable experience. Competitors in this timed obstacle course put their riding skills and teamwork to the test as they navigate a series of challenges. The combined team of Chenowith and her horse "Twister" received a score of 124 receiving a \$2,000 scholarship, and a championship buckle and Lamar Community College's Ty Arnold was named the Reserve Champion with a score of 122, receiving a \$1,000 scholarship.



The **Law Enforcement Training Academy** graduated its 51<sup>st</sup> class of students on December 12, 2024. All 19 cadets had positions lined up upon completion of this program!

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.

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The 11th annual **Ag Gala** took place on Sunday, December 31, 2023, at the Rizzuto Banquet Room located on the Otero College campus. Festivities continued until 12:15 a.m., marking the start of the New Year. There were exciting activities including a mouthwatering beef brisket dinner, music for dancing, a cash bar, door prizes, and both live and silent auctions full of unique items.

100% of the proceeds of the Ag Gala support Otero students majoring in an agricultural field of study. Last year's event is helping support five students in the 2023-2024 school year. Each student received \$2,000 to help pay for tuition, fees, and books. Scholarship recipients are Jace Trujillo of Pueblo, Colo., Hailey Smith of Manzanola, Colo., Quincy Basler of Akron, Colo., Cassidi Alverson of Loveland, Colo., and Nathan Bregar of Pueblo, Colo.



Otero College is pleased to announce that four of its students – Brooke Harris, Natasha Gutierrez, Makyla Whattler, and Aaliyah Guerrero – recently participated in the **UCCS Ethics Case Competition** and achieved great success. The competition was hosted at The University of Colorado, Colorado Springs on November 4, 2023.

Every year, the UCCS College of Business hosts the UCCS Ethics Case Competition, which provides students an opportunity to apply their business knowledge, critical thinking skills, and principle-based ethical decision-making to real-world ethical situations. This event also enables students to build networks with local professionals. Students from several colleges across Colorado are invited to take part in this competition.

Under the guidance of Otero's dedicated faculty and staff members, Jadyn Bevington, Caitlyn Dieckmann, and Joseph Eubank, the four Otero College students were well-prepared for the competition. Their hard work, dedication, and commitment paid off as they effectively showcased their exemplary skills.

In recognition of their exceptional performance, Otero College awarded the four students a micro-scholarship as a token of appreciation for their hard work and dedication.



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Otero College's Student Life and Enrollment Services hosted the first **Frost Fest** on Wed. Dec. 6 from 4 p.m. to 10 p.m. The Frost Fest committee invited the community and students to enjoy a festive evening filled with various activities. They rented a mobile ice-skating rink that was fun for all ages. Several college departments hosted interactive booths to engage students and community members. One group had

personalized holiday decorations, the ag students brought ponies, the basketball team had hot cocoa, and the local high school choir sang holiday carols throughout the night. Santa and Mrs. Claus even made an appearance. The committee anticipated that approximately 200 people would come, however, the turnout ended up being closer to 700! It was a great retention event as well as being a community building occasion.



The Otero College Community Choir presented, “Sing Joy to the World”, a concert, on Monday, Dec. 11. The concert began at 7 p.m. at the Ed Stafford Theatre. The concert opened with a medieval procession featuring the ancient sounds of drums and bells. The song “A Medieval Fa-La-La” takes the familiar carol “Deck the Hall” and transformed it, arranging it in the ancient Dorian scale. Director Dean Rees invited guest musicians to come and enhance the event. Included were Tess Belnap on cello, Marie Mora Menges, bass guitar, Aaron Martinez on drums, and the choir’s accompanist, Mary Belew. It was a wonderful event.

### **Create Education without Barriers through Transformational Partnerships**

**The Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN)** will be visiting the Otero Campus from Feb. 27 to Feb. 29, 2024, for their regularly scheduled Continuing Accreditation visit.

As part of the visit, members of the public are invited to meet with the site visit team and share their comments about the program. A public meeting has been scheduled for Wednesday, Feb. 28, 2024, at 2:30 p.m. in Room 135 of the Life Science building on the Otero College Campus. This provides an opportunity for individuals to voice their thoughts and opinions directly to the ACEN representatives.

Otero College partnered with Kids Crossing Child Placement Agency to host a **Giving Tree** this holiday season. This heartwarming initiative aims to bring joy to foster children during the holiday season by providing them with carefully selected gifts.

The Giving Tree was displayed in the foyer of the McDivitt Center Gym on Otero College's campus. Each ornament tag featured specific gifts requested by a child in need. Community members, students, and faculty were encouraged to participate by selecting an ornament, purchasing at least one gift listed on the tag, and returning the gift along with the tag to Otero College.



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**Smithsonian Exhibit comes to Otero** - Colorado Humanities will tour “Crossroads: Change in Rural America,” a Smithsonian’s Museum on Main Street (MoMS) exhibit to 10 Colorado communities August 2023 to December 2024. The exhibit takes a broad look at the characteristics of rural America. It explores how an attraction to and interaction with the land formed the basis of rural America, and how rural communities and small towns evolve. It also highlights how change has transformed rural America and how rural Americans are evolving for the future. The exhibition opens in the Otero College Student Center, room 112, at 2001 San Juan Ave., La Junta, CO 81050, on January 26, 2024, and will be on view there through February 29, 2024, before moving to the other communities.

“Crossroads” explores how rural American communities changed in the 20th century. Currently, most of the United States landscape remains rural with only 3.5% of the landmass considered urban. Since 1900, the percentage of Americans living in rural areas dropped from 60% to 17%. The exhibition looks at that remarkable societal change and how rural Americans responded.

The Grand Opening of the exhibit on January 26, 2024, will include a screening of the film “5 States of Colorado” at 5 p.m. Other free events to welcome the start of the exhibit

include additional screenings of the film “5 States of Colorado” on January 27, February 3, February 10, February 17 and February 24; a “History of La Junta” Presentation by Bob Fowler on February 1; “My Vision/The Manzanola Dry Settlement” Presentation by Darlene Derbigny on February 15; and the “Holly/Swink Railroad Company Helped Grow the Arkansas Valley” Presentation by Chuck Hanagan on February 22.



### Transform Our Own Workforce Experience

Otero College will be hosting a third **Town Hall Master Plan meeting**, where community members will have the opportunity to go over previously voiced opinions on improving the Otero campus. Scheduled to take place on Tuesday, Feb. 6, 2024, the event will be held from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the Rizzuto Banquet Room, located in the Student Center at 2001 San Juan Ave. in La Junta. We are encouraging all community members to join and actively participate in shaping the future of the college campus for the next five to ten years.

The Town Hall Master Plan meeting provides a platform for open dialogue and collaboration, fostering a sense of community involvement in guiding Otero College’s aspirations for the next half-decade. The college administration believes that by requesting feedback and insights from the La Junta community, we can better serve and meet our students’ and local employers’ evolving needs. This inclusive approach aims to ensure that Otero College remains a pivotal institution that offers educational opportunities that are both relevant and meaningful.

Otero College recognizes the significance of its responsibility in facilitating an environment that nurtures growth, learning, and development, not only for its students

but for the entire community. By actively seeking community involvement, the college aims to create a shared vision that will shape the college's future endeavors and benefit the wider region.

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Otero has been fortunate to hire a new Welding Instructor, **Wick Turner**, who began his new role on January 11th. He previously worked on campus as a Part-Time Instructor for the Law Academy.