



We're Focused on Your Future!

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

Transform the Student Experience

Otero College's Men's Basketball team hosted the Region IX tournament earlier in the month. After winning their game on Feb. 22, 81 to 72, the Otero team became the regular season Region IX South Champions. The Rattlers completed their regular season 22-6 overall and 9-3 in Region IX South play. The tournament was held at the McDivitt Center Gym March 3 through Saturday, March 5. The men's team won their first two games on Thursday and Friday, but lost by 1 point in the championship game on a half-court, buzzer beating shot by Trinidad.

Two Otero wrestlers, Marquis Kemp, and Adam Schulz, competed in the National Junior College Athletic Association National Championship for wrestling in Council Bluffs, Iowa March 3-5. Unfortunately, Kemp was injured after winning his first match and could not continue the tournament.

Pictured are the Otero Men's Basketball Team and in the second picture, John Lewis, wrestling coach, Adam Schulz, Marquis Kemp, and Tommy George, wrestling coach.



In late 2021, Otero College received a grant that will help students return to school to complete the degree they started. The Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative (COSI) launched Finish What You Started (FWYS), a program providing wraparound support services to obtain college credentials or degrees.

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Create Education without Barriers through Transformational Partnerships

On March 7, Otero College hosted the 2022 Ark-Valley Music League's Jr. 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.

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.

This year, the Jr. High Honor Choir was directed by Susan Kinnischtzke and accompanied by Sally Kappel. The Chairperson was Kristin Golding-Langston. The High School Honor Band was directed by David Williams and the Chairperson was Jonathan Colson. Matthew Beard of La Junta provided the equipment used and Dr. James Lind of Otero College facilitated the use of the Ed Stafford Theatre.



The President's Leadership Program (PLP) at Otero College is currently accepting applications for the 2022 – 2023 academic year. Scholarships may be awarded to leadership scholars who are selected through a competitive process for the program. To

apply online visit the Otero website at www.otero.edu. The deadline for scholarships at Otero this year is April 1, 2022.

Samme Ormiston, Otero business faculty, is director of the leadership program. According to Ormiston, the goal of the PLP is to develop and train emerging leaders at Otero College through an academic leadership program that is focused on field experience, service, and experiential learning. Students accepted into the program will earn an academic certificate in Leadership Studies in conjunction with an associate's degree.



Transform Our Own Workforce Experience

In February, Otero College began developing a new five-year strategic plan. There have been meetings with focus groups and round-table discussions were held among the various campus departments, the Otero Advisory Council, the Otero Foundation Board, alumni, and current students. This planning process is taking place to help set goals for the institution as well as develop the plans to achieve those goals. The components of our strategic plan will focus on vision, mission, values, goals, strategies, and key performance indicators.

The Strategic Planning Committee has been posting two-question surveys entitled "Twofer Tuesdays" that all are invited to participate in. Every Tuesday through the end of the planning timeline, survey questions will be sent out to employees and the survey link will be posted on the Otero website. Community members were encouraged to participate.

Upon reviewing feedback from the round-table discussions and weekly surveys, the Strategic Planning Committee will draft a plan for campus and community review. The final draft should be complete by mid-April and submitted to the Otero Advisory Council. Pending their approval, a presentation to the campus community will be held by the end of April 2022. The plan will also be posted on the website.

To find out more about Otero's strategic planning process, or to participate in the survey questions, please visit: <https://www.otero.edu/catalog/general/catmissionstrategic.aspx>.

Otero College is pleased to announce the faculty and staff members who have been named Employees of the Year for 2022. There are four categories of employees that are recognized each year for their outstanding service and dedication to the college. Those categories are: faculty, adjunct instructor, classified and administrative/professional technical.

Faculty of the Year: Cassidy Litle

Cassidy Litle, English, Communication and Theater Faculty, engages with students by asking thought-provoking questions and discussions, which creates a collegial atmosphere where students and the instructor are on similar levels. He meets students where they are and helps them to grow intellectually by examining some of the great literature of all time. He introduces important themes of our collective humanity through plays and dramas and gets students to think about how these ideas are relevant today. He has put on numerous theatrical productions that have been well received by audiences and faculty/staff members. He has even coordinated with other members in the Arts Department for these productions. Through the theatrical productions, Litle has gotten a very shy student who seldom talks to become more outgoing. He serves as a voice in CFAC, representing Otero College at the State-level.

Adjunct Instructor of the Year: Darlene Blackford

Darlene Blackford, Adjunct Instructor, is one of the most extraordinary teachers at Otero College. Caring for students on a personal and academic level is an admirable, and, perhaps, expected trait in a teacher, but Blackford far exceeds normal expectations. She goes above and beyond to make her classes engaging, enjoyable, informative, and meaningful. Blackford has taught many instructors some of those engaging techniques in professional development workshops. Other faculty have learned from her and have used those techniques in their classrooms to better engage the students. Blackford teaches many workshops through the year to educators outside of our community. She is creative and inventive. Above all, she is not only an exceptional teacher, but she is also teaching our future students to become exceptional teachers. Her caring extends beyond Otero College. She serves the community by feeding the community in a monthly church event and volunteers her time with Clean Valley Recycling. Darlene Blackford is an invaluable member of our Otero community.

Classified Employee of the Year: Irma Freidenberger

Irma Freidenberger, Custodian I, is a very respected member of the team at Otero College. She makes sure her day-to-day tasks are done in an efficient manner and to a high standard. She is always willing to learn new ways to clean and implements that knowledge. She takes initiative to learn new event set ups and works alongside

maintenance to change door locks in her assigned areas. Irma's are the cleanest on campus, according to her supervisor, and therefore represent Otero College to the highest level. Her attendance is consistent and timely which supports the team's overall ability to maintain their schedule and meet the needs of the college. Freidenberger goes above and beyond always. She assists students in locating classrooms and offices, as well as having a great working relationship with staff and faculty. She has the ability to make anyone smile.

Administrative/Professional Technical Employee of the Year: Alexa Cihura

Alexa Cihura, TRiO Career/Financial Coach, started at Otero in 2017. She is the longest tenured member of the Student Support Services (TRiO) team. She has continually served as an ambassador for TRiO and is always looking at ways to improve the program and services and as a result, improving the outcomes for the participants. During the last grant cycle, all objectives, but one, were met and much of this success is attributed to her commitment and professionalism to going above and beyond expectations for the program and the students. She holds workshops, does TTO radio broadcasts, takes students on cultural events, edits papers, among several other duties. She always puts her students first and helps them find the best course for them. It isn't always what the student wants, but what will have the best outcome and gain the most results. She is a highly valued member of the team.

There were several nominations this year. Employees are nominated by their supervisor, or in certain groups by their peers and then voted on by their peers. To even be nominated is a tremendous honor. Those that were nominated for Faculty of the Year were: Kimi Kelley, Anna Matecjeck, Allan Nolan, and Monica Valdez. For Adjunct Instructor of the Year: Joel Gray and Dean Rees. For Classified Employee of the Year: Randy Fritz, Rebecca Hund, and Kurt Paugh. For Administrative/Professional Technical Employee of the Year: Jenn Johnston, Dillon Martin, Tiana Martinez, Debbie Phillips, and Hailey Wold.

Pictured are (l-r); Alexa Cihura, administrative professional technical employee of the year; Kurt Paugh, filling in for Irma Freidenberger who was selected as classified employee of the year and nominated by Kurt; Cass Litle, faculty of the year; Darlene Blackford, adjunct faculty of the year; and Otero President, Tim Alvarez.

