



“AIM for Your Best Future”

February 2024 Newsletter

AIM, Assessing Innovative Measures for Higher Retention



Let's keep the love going all year long!!

AIM's goal is to assist students in being successful. This might include helping them plan their future and getting prepared for that next step along the journey. For this type of person, Cedric Quintana the Success Coach is the perfect resource to help you prepare for finding a career by putting together a resume, filling out job applications or finding resources to help. If you aren't quite ready for that step, but you need assistance with finding resources, so you don't go broke while attending school and need help finding food, clothing, spare change to pay those utilities then your go to person is Laura Martinez, AIM Case Manager. Another type of student might have all these things figured out but struggle ensuring they are taking the right classes so they can transfer to a four-year university. If this sounds like you then you will want to contact Macie Magallon in the Learning Commons, the AIM Academic Advisor. However, if you are the type of person who feels anxious being in a new environment and want help learning to adjust to college life, finding the right resources for the situation or just need someone to talk to when things seem a bit much then you may want to contact the Mentoring Coordinator, Lavona Tyscka, so she can match you up with either a peer mentor or a

staff/faculty mentor to help you maneuver your way through the transition into college. Feel free to come and talk to any of the AIM team, we will be glad to point you in the right direction to get help. Our goal is to see you succeed.

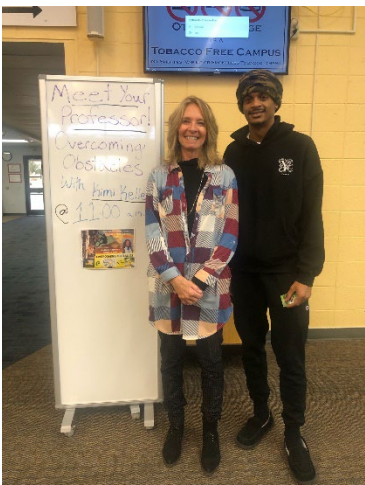
MEET YOUR OTERO...

AIM brought you several opportunities to get to know your instructors and key staff better through the months. We really appreciate your participation and have decided to branch out and begin inviting clubs, departments, and different staff to our Meet Your Otero event held monthly in the Learning Commons.



Dr. Zant with Aim Event gift card winner Jamir Todd

In President, Dr. Kimberly Zant presented. SODOEXO generously donated pizza so students and the community could enjoy lunch while listening to Dr. Zant. Thank you SODOEXO for a delicious meal and THANK YOU Dr. Zant for allowing us to get to know you better.



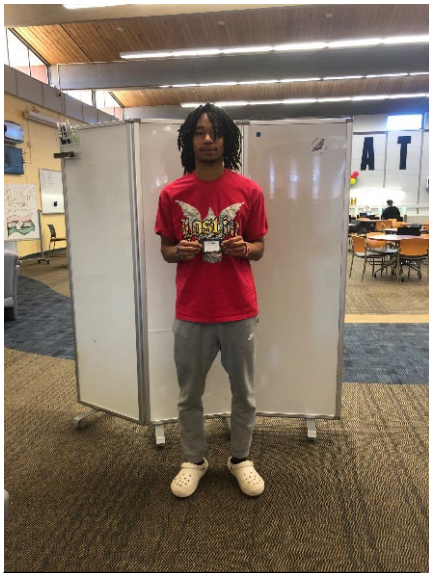
Kimi Kelley with AIM Event gift card winner Martin Finley

Also, in February Kimi Kelley gave a heartfelt and in depth presentation about how she was able to take a bad situation and turn things around. Thank you, Kimi, for sharing your story.



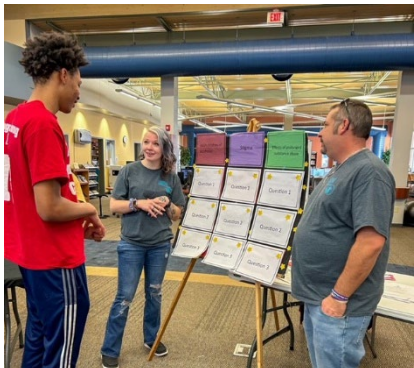
Molly Borton with AIM Event winner Jay Giannoni

We also met Molly Borton, Mental Health Counselor in February. She shared her personal journey of traveling the world before learning where her true passion lies. She went on to become a teacher then counselor proving that self-discovery can lead to dreams coming true. Thank you, Molly, for your inspiration.



Tee Robison

Finally, meet the monthly gift card winner for January, Tee Robison.



Esther Keeling and Lyle Bradshaw with Otero student

On February 13th, Otero College hosted its first ever Substance Awareness Fair. Otero partnered with multiple agencies throughout the Arkansas Valley to bring students information on the different aspects of substance use and harm reduction approaches. Students had the opportunity to learn about naloxone and fentanyl test strips, the science behind usage, legal aspects, mental health options, and what recovery and support looks like locally. Overall, the substance awareness fair was a huge success for Otero.



Adam Adler

Casemanager, Laura Martinez and Molly Borton, Mental Health Counselor host Mental Health Monday every other week in the Learning Commons. On February 12, 2024, Laura and Molly taught students about affirmations and helped students make butterflies filled with candy.

And now what's happening at Otero!!!

You heard it here first.



Jeff Reed

Otero College has long partnered with ESCALA, the premier professional development organization serving Hispanic Serving Institutions. Otero received our designation as a HSI in 2009 and is one of 14 higher education institutions in the state of Colorado to carry this banner. Over the last decade, Otero College has sent 25 faculty members to participate in ESCALA's program aimed to dismantle systemic racism. The AIM grant supports faculty continuing to participate as well as learning from our 2 most recent participants; Jeffrey Reed and Kimberly Montejano, who participated in 2023. The final step of the ESCALA process is to present on a project that has grown from the learnings of their experience. Reed and Montejano will both be presenting on their learnings and projects at the March 26th FIRE meeting. We look forward to their presentation at 2 pm in Humanities 113. Snacks provided by AIM!



Kimberly Montejano

The 2024 ESCALA programs are recruiting participants. Using funding from the AIM grant, Otero College will be sponsoring an additional handful of faculty members to attend. If you are interested in attending, please contact Maureen Rikhof for details. Maureen.Rikhof@otero.edu. More information about ESCALA's programs, including the dates for the 2024 programming, can be found at <https://www.escalaeducation.com/>. Note that the Otero cohort is encouraged to all participate in the same week.



Maureen Rikhof, Robin Reed, Cynthia Sallenbarger

Vol-a-palooza

The inaugural Vol-a-palooza was held in the Otero Student Center on January 20. From theater arts to child advocacy, literacy programs to citizens' policy academy; there were opportunities open to the nearly 100 community members and students who participated. Nineteen organizations rendezvoused to communicate to our SE Colorado community about the volunteer opportunities available in Otero and neighboring counties. As experiential and service learning are key tenants of the AIM grant's success structure, it was a perfect partnership for Otero College to expose our campus community to volunteer and service.

Door prizes, music and interactive offerings made for a very fun event with all the participating organizations reporting good response from future volunteers. Along with Otero College, Ark Valley CASA sponsored and organized the event. Additional sponsorship came from the La Junta Chamber of Commerce, Community Resource Center, First National Bank, Thunder Media and Signs & Designs of Rocky Ford. All sponsors and participants are looking forward to ongoing volunteer recruitment and support events!

Coming Soon! Mark your calendars and be ready for a fun time...

February 26, 2024 – Mental Health Monday with Molly and Laura. Learn how journaling can improve mental and physical health.

February 29, 2024 – **Meet Your Otero Financial Aid Department** – Andee Leininger, Director of Financial Aid and McKensie Avens, Assistant Director of Financial Aid will present on the New FAFSA Process, scholarships, student loans, work study and financial literacy. (10:30 a.m. in the Learning Commons).

March 5, 2024 – **Meet Your Otero International Students Coordinator** – Jamie Mendoza will present about his journey from small business owner to International Students Coordinator. (10:30 a.m. in the Learning Commons).

March 12, 2024 – **Meet Your Otero Marketing & Communications Coordinator** – Stephen Matthews, acclaimed author and finalist in the 2023 Best Indie Book Awards in both categories for Literary Fiction and LGBTQ+ for his novel, “The Age of a Lobster.” (10:30 a.m. in the Learning Commons).



AIM Sponsored Drawings - Did you know we have multiple drawings going on each semester? Every time you attend an AIM event and SIGN-IN, we will put your name in for our drawing. The more events you attend, the more your name will be entered. We draw a name at the end of each event and each month, but the grand prize will be drawn at the end of the semester. Prizes include gift cards and AirPods! Look for the AIM Logo on flyers/announcements throughout campus so you know when to attend an

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