

Project Achieve

FROM DREAM TO DEGREE

TRIO

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

UNIVERSITY OF
Nebraska
Omaha



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FAFSA DUE SOON

BY PAT KILLEEN-BROWN

This is an important reminder: If you have not already completed a FAFSA form, do not delay; complete a FAFSA as soon as possible. Completing a FAFSA now can maximize the amount of financial aid you may receive. The UNO Office of Financial Support & Scholarships plans to start making offers to students in May. To create your FAFSA account visit StudentAid.gov. If you are a dependent student or if you are married, your parents or spouse will also need to create an account to submit their information. If you need assistance, contact the UNO Office of Financial Support & Scholarships Phone: 402-554-2327, email: unofinaaid@unomaha.edu, schedule an appointment on MavCONNECT, or stop by their front desk in the Epley Administration Building, Room 103, between 8:00-5:00. You can also talk to your Project Achieve advisor. For assistance completing your FAFSA form you can also contact EducationQuest at 402-391-4033.

PROJECT ACHIEVE NEWSLETTER

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DIRECTOR REFLECTION

BY CRISTINA LAMAS

Hello Project Achievers! It is hard to believe we are approaching the end of the spring semester! Some of you are looking forward to walking across the stage in a few weeks and contemplating what is next for you and some of you are looking forward to a well-deserved summer break! Nonetheless, we are excited for you, and we are proud of your hard work this year.

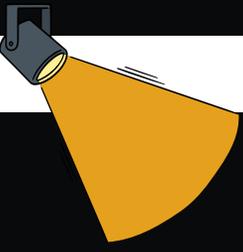
As finals are approaching, make sure are getting enough sleep, staying hydrated, planning and prioritizing tasks, you are setting some time aside for movement (walking, bike rides, dancing, etc.), eating healthy and nutritious food, and focus on the finish line! You got this!

I also want to share how incredibly grateful I am for all of you, and for having such a strong presence in our office and at all our events! You are the reason Project Achieve is thriving, and we are thankful that you are invested in what we do for you!

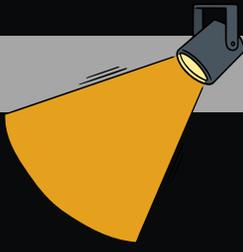
I could not be more proud or excited about the future of Project Achieve. I look forward to 2024-2025!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cristina Lamas".

Project Achieve Director



STUDENT HIGHLIGHTS



Grace Buttermore will graduate in May and has accepted a position with Dvorak Law Group as a corporate analyst. She plans to attend law school starting in fall 2025.

Sherlyn Jimenez-Covarrubias was selected to participate in the premed Summer Health Professions Education Program (SHPEP) at the University of Nebraska Medical Center this summer.

Paw Aye was admitted into the UNO Grace Abbott School of Social Work. She will start her social work classes this fall.

Bhumika Tamang was also accepted into SHEPEP.

Ja'Nae Smith will be the student speaker at this year's Arts and Sciences commencement.

Ximena Anguiano Cortes has been selected for the Latino Center of the Midlands Siembra Medios Multimedia Summer Internship program

Erick Alvarez will spend the summer in Washington DC. He has a summer internship with Congressman Don Bacon's office. He will be working on policy for the Coalition on Adoption Institute. Whose goal is to prevent barriers that help children from being part of a nurturing and permanent family.

Ruth Tha has been accepted into the summer sonography program at Methodist.

Pablo Perez was selected to be part of an internship with the Latino Heritage Internship Program in Arizona for this summer .

Paw Ku Tee has been selected to be part of the Peace Corps. She will be heading to Mongolia on June 6th for two years!

COMP II



Registration is open for Brigid Johnson's English Composition II, Section 017 class this fall. If this is a course you still need, please contact your academic advisor to let them know you want to be in this call. You will have priority to enroll as a Project Achieve student. You will also get the benefit of having greater access to your instructor, as she is also the English Specialist and an advisor for Project Achieve. The class meets Mondays and Wednesdays, 11:30 am-12:30 pm. Class Search: ENGL 1160-017

SEVEN DAYS OF SERVICE

BY LAH SOE

I am grateful for the experience while volunteering for 2024 Seven Days of Service. It was an opportunity to better understand my own Omaha community while helping the Black Police Officers Association of Omaha (BPOAO). Some of the BPOAO's objectives are to improve the community within law enforcement and help bridge the gap between the law enforcement and minority communities within Omaha. While helping prepare for an upcoming Easter Event that BPOAO was organizing, I made new friends from different backgrounds and understood different experiences. In addition, I am currently in a TRIO Program, Project Achieve. While volunteering with Project Achieve, I also got to know the students and staff better, and it helped me understand who they are as individuals. I think volunteering is a great opportunity to understand local communities, and it makes me feel good about myself knowing I'm making a difference. Overall, I am grateful for 2024 Seven Days of Service for partnering up with a local non-profit organization and Project Achieve for finding this opportunity for the students.

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY BUILD

BY CHRIS HOLMES

On Saturday, March 23rd, the UNO Student Chapter of Habitat For Humanity (UNO HFH) had our first service event of the semester! This event was from 8:00 am to 3:00 pm and took place at the Bluestem Prairie Volunteer Campus located at 6416 Forest Lawn Ave Omaha, NE 68104. We had around 8 volunteers present. During this event, volunteers framed houses with instruction and guidance by Habitat For Humanity construction employees. We used nail guns, saws, drills, and other tools to help stand up wooden frames that shaped the room layouts of the Habitat For Humanity homes. Each volunteer was required to wear a hard hat, safety glasses, and work gloves. There were times where cutting and reshaping of the wooden frames was needed so volunteers used tape measures, saws, and nail guns to rebuild frames. The UNO HFH has been active for almost 2 years now. Since this service event was kind of last minute as there was a transfer of leadership, we are very appreciative to all the volunteers and members that showed up and made this service event possible!

If you would like to join the student organization, please email me at chrisholmes@unomaha.edu.

KICKBALL REFLECTION

BY JOAHAN NAVARRO

In our Kickball game for the semester, we had a 9-inning game with two teams, with my team falling short and losing in a very competitive game. There was a great turnout of Project Achieve students who all got to showcase their skills and also get in a good workout. After our kickball game, we also played a few dodgeball rounds, where again, my team came short of victory. Nonetheless, it was a fun and memorable experience. It was amazing seeing everybody enjoying their time participating and utilizing the university's gym and equipment, or perks as I like to call them.

I had a lot of fun; I met and spoke with many people that I didn't know were in the program. I want to thank the entire staff at Project Achieve and also my fellow Peer Mentors for organizing this event and having our students relax and chill for a bit before finals begin to ramp up. Bonding events like these are always needed to let loose a little and I hope this becomes a yearly thing in the future!



NSLDC ORLANDO CONFERENCE EXPERIENCE

BY ANDREW KELLY

Hi, my name is Andrew Kelly, and I was able to attend the National Student Leadership Diversity Convention (NSLDC) conference in cooperation with Project Achieve. Initially, I was hesitant to go, as I am not a fan of conferences or long presentations because it reminds me of lectures that I hear in class every day. I was excited to travel though, as I haven't been to many places before, so I took up the offer. Overall, the experience turned out to be very insightful and educational. The conference was not what I imagined previously by quite a large margin. I actually felt a part of the activities, as we were able to network with other individuals from schools all around the country and break off into smaller sub sections where we discussed topics about leadership, diversity, and inclusivity.

Additionally, when we were required to attend some lectures, they were actually enjoyable and helpful in aiding growth as a leader. Overall, if given the chance to re-experience an event and a trip like this, I would one hundred percent take up the offer, and if any of you reading this had the same feelings I initially did, trust me; you won't regret taking the chance to open up your shell, learn, and make new meaningful connections.



ALUMNI/STUDENT/STAFF VOLUNTEERING

BY KMWEE PAW

On April 13, I joined Project Achieve to volunteer at Open Door Mission. I was assigned to the assembly line at the end of the shop. My job was to hand out bonus items, bread, and drinks. At first, I felt a little bored since there weren't many people, and it was going slow, but then I suddenly saw a few customers coming together. I didn't expect to immediately go from waiting to jumping back and forth in my area to get the items people needed. It felt overwhelming at first, but then I got the hang of it and was able to work out a new set up to get the items the people needed.

While doing my job I didn't feel anything except to give away the items and move onto the next person, but when it came time to clean up, I felt relieved and content. I was relieved because I was a little tired, but I felt more content because I was able to participate in an event that allowed me to give back to my community. I was comfortable with volunteering with Project Achieve because I've volunteered with them before, and I know with whom I am volunteering; this allowed me to be who I am around the other members.

Other people should volunteer with Project Achieve because the members will make you feel at home and help you when you need it. Project Achieve offers many volunteer opportunities, so if you're in need of some volunteer hours, Project Achieve will always have something ready for you.



BENSON LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

BY PAW THLAY WAH

On a sunny morning of April 5th, I entered UNO's Barbara Weitz Community Engagement Center, ready to host the Benson Leadership Summit. My role was to create a learning event for over 28 Benson High School students, where from 10 AM to 2 PM, they learned about different leadership topics and heard from current college students.

The summit was a joint effort between Benson staff and me, a former student, to shape these young learners into future leaders. On this day, we included informative sessions by students from Project Achieve, the Public Health Student Association, and the Karen Student Association.

A standout session was about public speaking and self presentation, led by Mary Odette from Project Achieve. The group talk, filled with personal stories and useful tips, really drew the students in.

In addition to these sessions, I also set up a tour and gave students a chance to meet with former Benson students. It was exciting to see their excitement as they imagined their own futures at UNO.

Before closing, we collected students' feedback on the event. Their positive responses filled me with a sense of accomplishment. They felt they knew more about college and professional life. They also gave helpful ideas for future events, like making the conference longer and having more interactive sessions.

Organizing the event was tough, especially with my busy schedule. However, the rewarding experience and the chance to make a difference in the community make me open to hosting more events like this. Looking back on the day, I feel hopeful for the next generation of leaders we're helping to grow.



30TH ANNIVERSARY ALUMNI MIXER

BY BRIGID JOHNSON



On Friday, April 12, 2024, Project Achieve hosted an alumni event to kick off the 30th anniversary celebration. We met at the Backlot Taphouse in Aksarben Village and enjoyed pizza, wings, fries, and sodas. Eleven alumni, including current Project Achieve advisor, Jonathan Quitl, were in attendance along with the entire Project Achieve staff and other esteemed members of UNO Student Life and Well-Being. The alumni attendees graduated from UNO between the years of 2014-2023. It was a beautiful evening to mix, mingle, and catch up with one another. I am excited about future events to connect Project Achieve alumni with one another, our staff, and current and future students in the program.



30TH ANNIVERSARY LIBRARY DISPLAY

BY BRIGID JOHNSON

In conjunction with Project Achieve's 30th anniversary celebration, advisors Brigid Johnson and Pat Killeen Brown worked with the UNO Criss Library staff and set up a display on the library's main floor that traces the thirty-year history of the program on UNO's campus. The display includes information on the inception of TRiO programs with the Higher Education Act of 1965, a picture of Dr. Mary Mudd, the author of the grant that established Project Achieve at UNO, a letter from former President Obama, pictures of students volunteering throughout the community, previous newsletters, programs from Honors Luncheons, and much more. There's even a 1st place trophy for a food fight. We hope that many of you had an opportunity to visit the display.



END OF YEAR PICNIC

BY BOB HEITERT & CRISTINA LAMAS

Project Achieve had the last event for the academic year on May 1st. Our End of the Year Picnic was a tremendous success despite the rain.

The food seemed to be a huge hit as people enjoyed the pulled pork, pulled chicken, chips, cookies, and ice cream treats. The lawn games were played with enthusiasm, friendly challenges, and laughter which included yard Jenga, bags and Connect Four.

The best part was everyone enjoyed the relaxing environment and camaraderie. We also appreciated meeting new people who were guests of our Project Achieve students. And we even had a Project Achieve mascot, Stella (Cristina's year old Bassett Hound) stop in and get lots of pets from everyone.

We could not have thought of a better way to end this academic year.



PROJECT ACHIEVE HONORS LUNCHEON

BY BOB HEITERT & CRISTINA LAMAS

Project Achieve hosted the end of the year Honors Luncheon on Thursday, April 18th, 2024, celebrating our students and their accomplishments. This year's event was special for several reasons.

Project Achieve celebrated 30 years of helping students stay in school, get good grades, and ultimately earn their undergraduate degree. Overall, almost 800 students in our program have graduated from UNO since the start of Project Achieve and this year is no different because it shows no signs of slowing down with our student engagement and 40 graduates for the year.

We also had a tremendous turnout to the luncheon with 72 Project Achieve students in attendance. This is a significant percentage of the total students we are serving. In addition, we were thankful for the 50 others in attendance, including UNO's Chancellor Li, our scholarship donor, Mr. John Scott, several members of the Executive Leadership team, Dean of multiple colleges, faculty, Executive Directors, some of our community partners: EducationQuest and the SAVE Program, and our Project Achieve alumni. It was an exciting day to celebrate our students' hard work.

We are thankful for the tremendous support we received for our students and we are looking forward to next year!

