

As a first-generation Chicana student, my journey in higher education has been confusing, full of obstacles, yet I have persevered. I come from a single-parent household where at an early age I had to raise my younger sister. I have learned to take full advantage of my opportunities, including my education. Education is liberation therefore I plan to take my education and reciprocate it with action. An optimistic mind and friendly attitude come naturally to me and it attracts people to confide in me. I have used my soft and communication skills in all aspects of my life and will continue to use them in my future work. My goal is to aid communities that are underrepresented and victims of systemic oppression. I am committed to the programs that promote students' inclusivity and well-being, such as being President of MAS Society, a student club working to increase cultural awareness about the Latinx community and create space to be our authentic selves. Navigating college is not straightforward but programs like the Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative (COSI) strive to provide wrap-around support services through the mentor program I participate in, financial aid workshops, a student pantry, and social events. Lastly, the Center of Academic Achievement invests in my personal, academic, and professional success through the use of study nights, tutoring, semester check-ins, and even special counseling support. I also commit my time to Rainbow Coalition, an activist group that focuses on empowering all minority communities by providing resources such as coat drives, a community pantry, toy drives, and funding scholarships for students with DACA.

I am committed to paying it forward so much so that I am a peer mentor for COSI where I can guide my mentees through obstacles and fears. Furthermore, being President of the MAS Society and a member of Rainbow Coalition has initiated this burst of motivation inside of me to engage, educate, and empower the Greeley community by utilizing our networks in order to find solutions and ideas to better our quality of life. For example, creating partnerships between these

groups to share resources, plan fundraisers, advertise each other's events, and collaborate on workshops. MAS Society and Rainbow Coalition have already planned a movie screening of Critical Thinking, followed by a discussion on the concerns in our educational systems regarding the lack of representation of Latino communities. MAS Society is also in the early planning stages of monthly workshops in collaboration with different groups on campus to help educate those around us on concerns our communities face daily. All the connections I have made within these organizations have allowed me to gain valuable wisdom that I hope others can learn from me.

Along the way, I got lost in my doubts and I failed classes but because of the moral support of my educators, mentors, and friends, my persistence to obtain my degree has felt easier. Therefore, the work I do continues and builds upon the support given to me. I push myself to do better every day even if it feels lonely, stressful, and as if the world is against me. I might not understand or know how to do things but I know I can learn and improve. I know many people who can relate to my experience, and I hope they are inspired never to give up and believe in their own success. I am determined to demonstrate to my sister and my community that success is possible even if we fail.