

TRIO SSS Spring 2024 Semester Review

Here's what has happened in the last semester and what's to come!



June 2024



We are temporarily located in the Partnership building. We are currently using a temporary TRIO lounge and offices in the Partnership building.

We said farewell to our old space by inviting current students to paint on the walls before demolition began and they delivered.

Please be patient with us as we get used to this new space and cubical dynamic, we are doing our best to make it work for staff and students to continue meeting with us in person as they have in the past.

On Campus days:

Aly Olson - Wednesday, Thursday, Friday

Matt Logan - Monday, Tuesday, Thursday

Ac Harrison - Monday, Wednesday, Thursday

Heather Kaminsen - Monday, Tuesday, Thursday



In this newsletter you can expect:

Spring Event Highlights

Alumni Profile

Current Student Profile

First Gen Faculty and Staff

Upcoming events and Programs





Award and Transfer Celebration

On May 1st we celebrated our 12 graduates and transfers who could attend the event, we had 34 Graduates and Transfers total this past spring!

The event was held in the Garden Room and was a desert reception.

Students were awarded with a pennant of their transfer school, a certificate for completing TRIO SSS, and a TRIO cord to be worn at graduation.



Transfers colleges include:
University of Minnesota Duluth
Carlson School of Business
Minnesota Twins Cities
Mankato
Macalester College
Metropolitan University



TRIO Game Socials

This past semester our peer mentor hosted two game socials for students. The first one was held in February and the second one was held in April.

We had an awesome turn out of students who played Mario Kart, did puzzles and even brought their own games to share!

This is a great event, that we plan to continue, this event helps to foster a social outlet and way to build belongingness at Normandale and in TRIO.



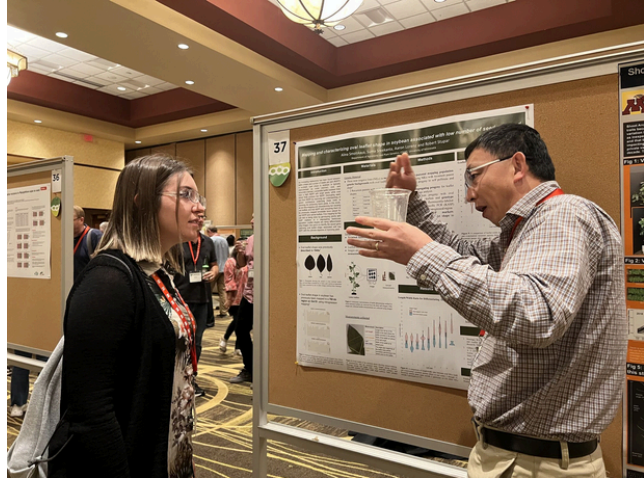
Campus Visits

This past semester we took students to both the University of Minnesota Twin Cities and Augsburg!

The students enjoyed a tour of the campus, major specific breakout sessions and lunch!

Exploring four year universities is an important event we facilitate for our students each semester. We provide the transportation, structure, and support that many students need to get their foot in the door and start the transfer process!

Alumni Profile:



Alina Smolksaya

Alina Smolkskaya is a former TRIO student from the class of 2017. She graduated Normandale with honors and her associates degree in Business.

After graduating Normandale Alina went on to the University of Minnesota Twin Cities, where she decided to follow her passion and switched gears towards biology and plant science.

“My journey was never a straightforward one, but following my passions I ended up where I needed to be. “

After graduating she completed an internship with a plant biotech company and returned to get her Masters of Science in Applied Plant Science, with a specific focus on plant breeding and molecular genetics. Alina is currently mapping a gene in the soybean plant that can change how many seeds it can produce in a pod.

Alina had great advice for our current students, telling them to seek out mentorship

“Imagine you are in a dark room and you have a little tiny flashlight. This room represents your field: be it dentistry, computer sci, engineering or something else. You are trying to see what's in the room but your view is very limited....Being paired with a mentor is like having someone come in with a giant flashlight that can illuminate half the room at a time and on top of that your mentor can point the flashlight to parts of the room you didn't even know existed! “

Aline plans to pursue her PhD next , although she is undecide on where this next journey will take her, we know she will do amazing this and we are proud to have her as Normandale TRIO alum!





Current Student Profile: Alex Elbaz



Why did you decide to attend Normandale Community College and how long have you been here?

I attended Normandale because it was in such a convenient location for me. That and with the phenomenal reputation they have with support, affordability, and transfer pathway options, were all the reasons why I began my college journey at Normandale. It's even truly remarkable to see how Normandale went from a simple community college to becoming a part of the MN State System and becoming the 2nd largest college in Minnesota.

I've been a student here since the beginning of 2023, and there was never any doubt in my mind that Normandale was the right fit for me, and I got to start a new chapter in my life because of them.

How did you learn about TRIO? I learned about TRIO through Normandale's Office for Students With Disabilities. I was already with OSD as I have a mild form of Autism and a Stutter or a Speech-Language Impairment. They told me about how TRIO supports students who come from more disadvantaged backgrounds and provide other things such as additional scholarship opportunities, touring other colleges/universities, and engaging in other fun activities. I thought joining TRIO would be good for me being that I did come from a very disadvantaged background, and want to get all the support possible so I can thrive inside and outside the classroom as well as planning for my future.

How would you describe TRIO to other students?

I would describe TRIO as a program that assists students who are either first-generation college students, come from a low-income background, or have a disability. I for one am in TRIO for all three of those things. They are another great source of support for things such as academic advising, financial aid, assistance with resumes, and so on. TRIO is another great way to build community with other students who share similar backgrounds. I love TRIO and I don't think I would be as successful as I am today without their support and guidance. TRIO is a prime example of the message I try to send to everyone is that for anyone who is considering attending Normandale no matter who you are or where you're at in life, everyone believes in you and I believe in you



What is your favorite thing about being a Normandale student?

My favorite thing about being a Normandale student is that they truly are all about caring, curiosity, and commitment. I definitely know what it's like to face adversity with some of the hardships I've endured, but it wasn't until I came to Normandale that I truly felt like I had a place somewhere, and I was celebrated, not tolerated. Because I was welcomed with such open arms, I wanted to give back to the rest of the Normandale community by becoming one of its Student Ambassadors. I'm the face of the school, that first point of contact, and I make sure I'm positively representing the college. I love my role and it has made me more fulfilled than ever! I even once spoke from the heart about my experience at Normandale on a Student Panel for a Staff development in the Fall 2023 Semester, which left a powerfully positive impact on everyone. Ever since the panel, all the faculty/staff have been just as compelled as ever to keep doing what they're doing. I still get compliments about it to this very day! The biggest thing with all of that was that it was only the beginning for me. I have a whole other year at Normandale left before I graduate, and if I can leave such an impact early on my higher education journey, I can do that just about anywhere. When I have a positive experience, I don't just keep it to myself, I try to find ways to give that energy back to others so they have something to be inspired by.

What are you studying / your future plans?

I'm currently majoring in Communications here at Normandale for my undergraduate program. I plan to graduate with an Associate of Arts Degree in Communications by the Spring 2025 Semester. Afterwards, I plan to get a Bachelor's degree most likely either at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities in Journalism or Augsburg University for Communications. I even have other Universities in Mind such as Minnesota State University Mankato and Metropolitan State University for my Bachelor's and if I ever choose to pursue a Master's Degree. Writing has always been something I've been passionate about and has had positive feedback from anyone I've shared it with. I found my writing to be at its peak when I'm critically thinking and analyzing something as opposed to being a creative writer, and that's why I think Journalism is the perfect fit for me!

Engaging First Generation Faculty and Staff

TRIO SSS is working hard to engage our on campus experts , our very own first generation faculty and staff.

Earlier in the semester we posted to the portal and in heard it here to gather volunteers, first generation faculty and staff to engage with our students.

Volunteers were able to select from the following list of ways to be involved:

- Volunteering for first generation day events
- Serving on a TRIO SSS advisory board
- Displaying a First Generation sign in your office
- listed on the TRIO SSS website or social media
- Luncheons or events to connect students with first generation faculty/staff"
- Serving on a panel
- Being featured in TRIO newsletter
- Include I'm First designation in email signature



If you missed the original posting but identify as a First Generation alumni or current student please email Heather at Heather.Kaminsen@normandale.edu!

2024-2025 PROGRAMMING



WELCOME LUNCHEON
NEW STUDENTS

TRANSFER VISITS

LUNCH AND LEARNS

GAME NIGHT WITH TRIO PEER MENTOR

SCHOLARSHIP & FINANCIAL AID WORKSHOP

CAREER EXPLORATION

GRADUATE AND TRANSFER CELEBRATION

TRIO ALUMNI EVENT