



# 22 23 **EMPOWERING CHOCTAWS**

COLLEGE FRESHMAN YEAR INITIATIVE



# Choctaw Nation

## College Freshman Year Initiative

THE GOAL OF THE COLLEGE FRESHMAN YEAR INITIATIVE (FYI) IS TO CREATE A COMMUNITY AMONG CHOCTAW STUDENTS, THEIR COLLEGE CAMPUS, AND OUR STAFF WHEREIN FRESHMAN STUDENTS ARE EMPOWERED TO MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS AND DEVELOP ACADEMIC AND LIFE SKILLS TO BECOME CONFIDENT, PROACTIVE, AND ACCOUNTABLE PARTICIPANTS IN THEIR COLLEGE EDUCATION.

### OUR VISION:

LIVING OUT THE CHAHTA SPIRIT OF FAITH, FAMILY, AND CULTURE

### OUR MISSION:

TO THE CHOCTAW PROUD, OURS IS THE SOVEREIGN NATION OFFERING OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH AND PROSPERITY.





**Choctaw Nation**

College Freshman Year Initiative

# SENIOR MANAGER

Jamie Irwin is the Senior Manager of College Freshman Year Initiative. Jamie is a Choctaw Nation Tribal Member from Hartshorne, Oklahoma. She received her associate degree from Eastern Oklahoma State College. She then went on to obtain her bachelor's and master's degrees from East Central University. Jamie worked in the public education system for eighteen years before accepting a position with Choctaw Nation in the Fall of 2015. She previously served as the Choctaw Nation Success Coach at Eastern Oklahoma State College before being promoted to Senior Manager.

**Top Photo:** In April 2023, Jamie received a Certificate of Appreciation from the NFEC on her work with educating our Choctaw Freshmen in the area of Financial Literacy through College FYI.

**Middle Photo:** Jamie is always searching for ways to incorporate the Choctaw culture into the College FYI program.

**Bottom Photo:** Jamie is featured with Senior Director, Paula Harp, who sponsored her. Jamie was selected as a participant of the Texas Women's Leadership Institute Cohort 7 that is lead by Marsha Clark. Jamie graduated in September 2022 after the conclusion of the 9-month program.



**JAMIE IRWIN**





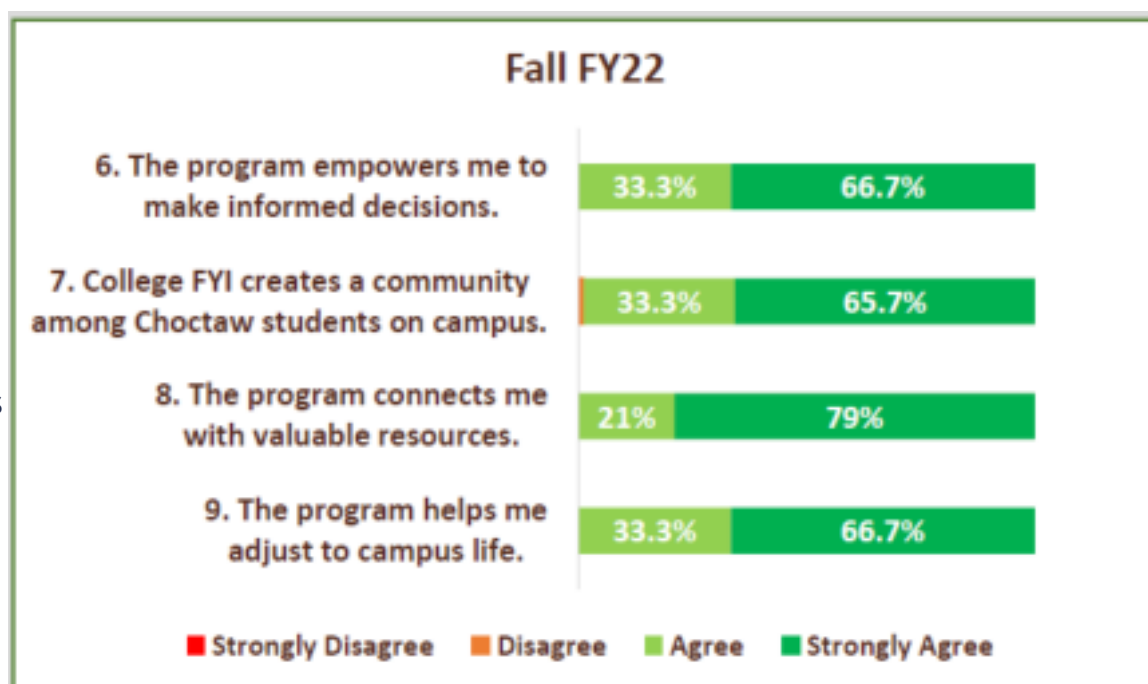
**Choctaw Nation**

College Freshman Year Initiative

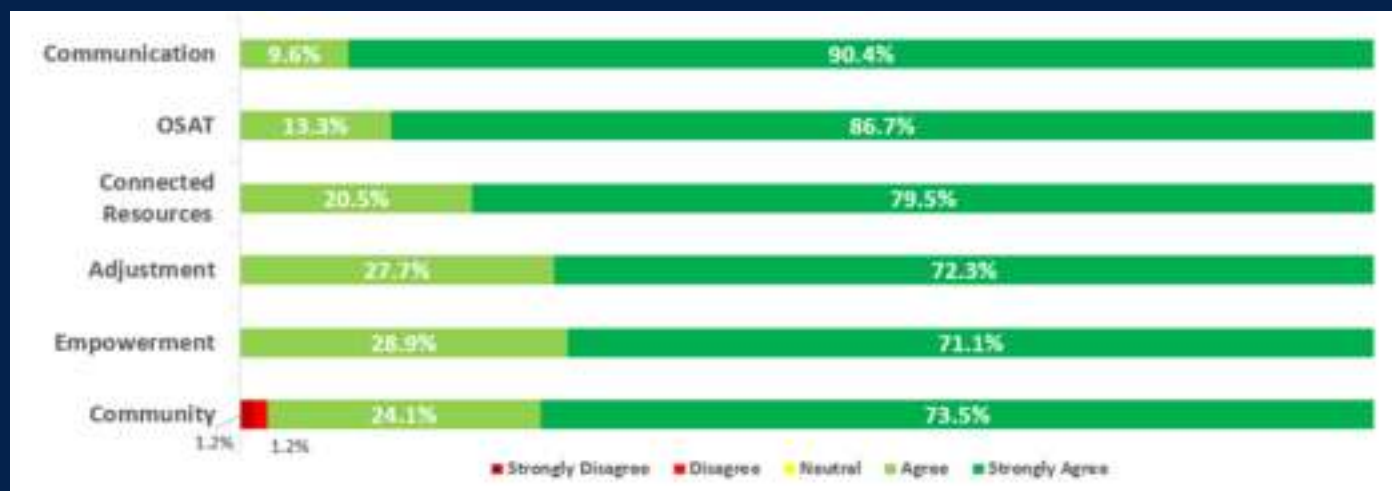
# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



College FYI staff does their best to improve the program year-after-year and meet students' needs. Each semester, College FYI students participate in surveys to gauge their satisfaction of the program.



## Spring FY23



Scores improved in each area from Fall 2022-Spring 2023 across all three campuses, Carl Albert, Eastern, and Southeastern!





**Choctaw Nation**

College Freshman Year Initiative

# PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Lindsey Henry is the Program Coordinator for College Freshman Year Initiative. Lindsey is a Choctaw Tribal Member from Antlers, Oklahoma. She received her bachelor's degree in psychology from Southeastern Oklahoma State University in May 2015. She is currently working on obtaining her master of arts in clinical mental health counseling, also from Southeastern. Lindsey has been with Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma since March 2011 and College FYI since February 2016.

**Top Photo:** Lindsey was awarded 2022 Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Associate of the 3rd Quarter (Tribal Services Division) for her dedication to our program and Tribal Members.

**Middle Photo:** Lindsey completed CCC (Clarity, Confident, Community) Leadership in June 2023. CCC is a nine-day leadership program, spread over four months, for women in the nonprofit and education sectors.

**Bottom Photo:** Lindsey is always there as a helping hand during campus events and Camp Chahta. She keeps our program running smoothly and we couldn't do it without her!



LINDSEY HENRY





**Choctaw Nation**

College Freshman Year Initiative



**Front Row (L-R):**

Tori Blemmel  
Kailee Daney  
Asst. Chief Austin  
Chief Batton  
Shay James  
Lesli Armstrong

**Back Row (L-R):**

Mason Phillips  
Josh Jones  
Joshua Kitzrow  
Caleigh Reading  
Mallori Underwood  
Klaira Morris

# CHIEF'S LEADERSHIP CLASS

## 2022 - 2023

The Chief's Leadership Class is a one year only program designed to advance leadership skills, cultural knowledge, and personal/professional development. College FYI is working diligently with Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma leaders and associates to provide a valuable experience for our outstanding Choctaw college students.

Students must have a minimum 2.5 GPA, Junior or Senior status, participated in the College FYI program, and enrolled full time for the fall semester at an accredited university. Students receive \$1000 scholarship upon attending summer and winter retreats.





**Choctaw Nation**

College Freshman Year Initiative

# CHIEF'S LEADERSHIP CLASS







**Choctaw Nation**

College Freshman Year Initiative

# CHIEF'S LEADERSHIP CLASS



## STUDENT QUOTE -

"The Chief's Leadership Class is a fantastic way to advance your academic, professional, and personal goals."

-Shay James





**Choctaw Nation**

College Freshman Year Initiative

**ACAC**

American College Application Campaign

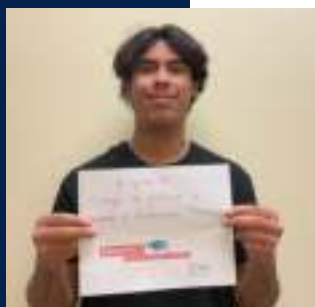
**ACT** Center for  
Equity in Learning

# 2022 WHY APPLY

AMERICAN COLLEGE  
APPLICATION CAMPAIGN

#WhyApply (to college) Day is sponsored by the American College Application Campaign, an initiative of ACT's Center for Equity in Learning. Various events in partnership with approximately 6000 high schools across the country are hosted, to support students through the college application process. This is in hopes to inspire all students, but especially first-generation college students and those from low-income families.

Every September, ACAC encourages everyone to wear their college merchandise and share why you believe students should apply for college and/or why you applied. These photos are shared to social media with the hashtag #WhyApply. College FYI has participated in #WhyApply Day since 2020 and we hope to continue to inspire others to follow their dreams.



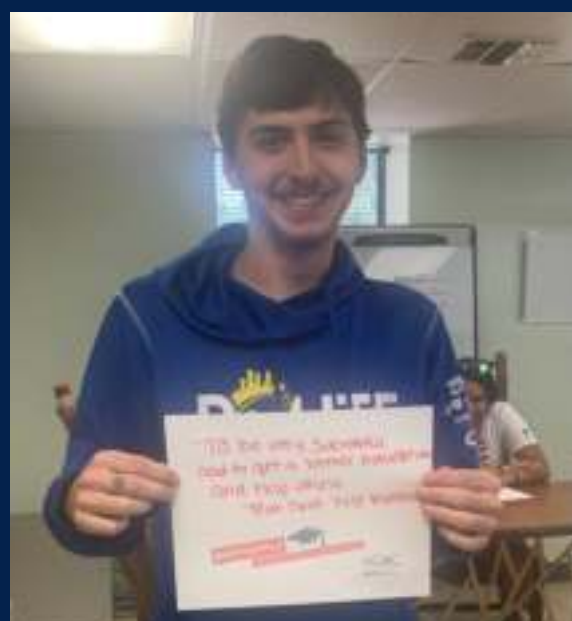
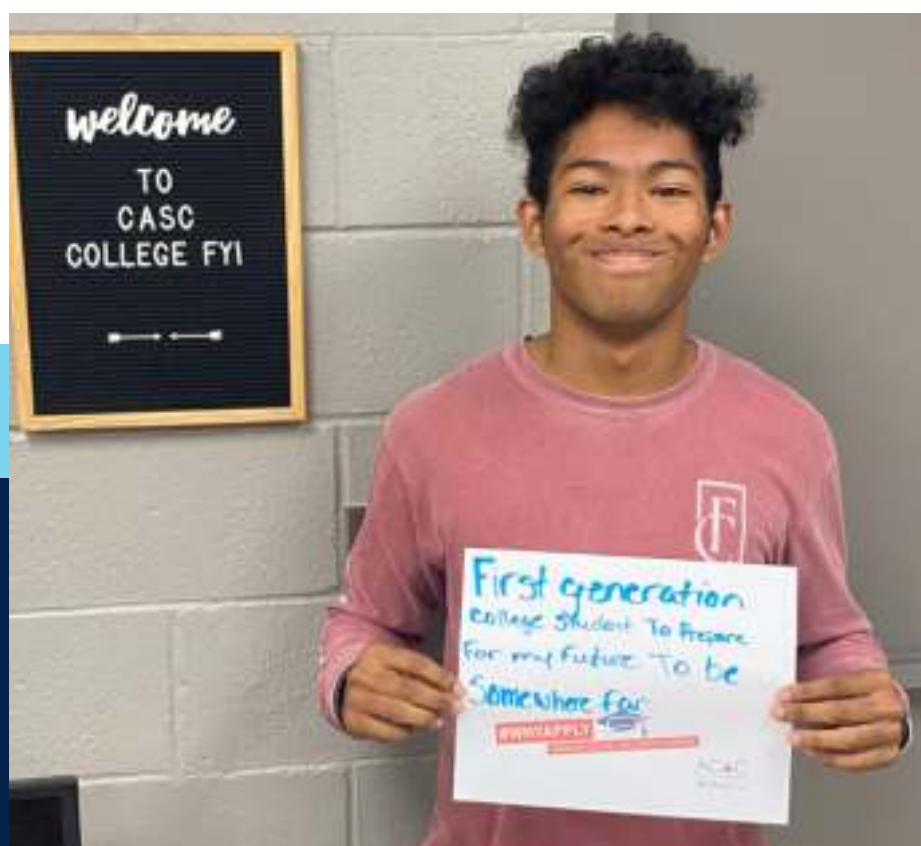




**Choctaw Nation**

College Freshman Year Initiative

# 2022 WHY APPLY



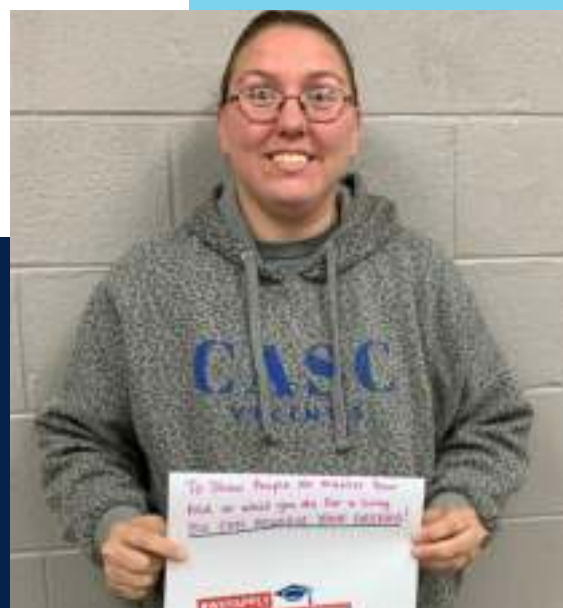




**Choctaw Nation**

College Freshman Year Initiative

# 2022 WHY APPLY





**CARL ALBERT**  
— STATE COLLEGE —  
EST. 1933



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**Choctaw Nation**

College Freshman Year Initiative



[CHOCTAWNATION.COM](http://CHOCTAWNATION.COM)





# 2022 CAMP CHAHTA





# 2022 CAMP CHAHTA



## STUDENT QUOTE -

"One of the benefits of being in Camp Chahta is that you get to meet a lot of new people. I still see people that I met in Camp Chahta around campus and we talk. You also get to know the campus more, get a better experience, and you know where things are. My favorite part was getting to learn new things about my culture that I had never known before. I would definitely encourage everyone to be in Camp Chahta. It was a great opportunity and got me out of my shell and ready to just jump into college!"

-Sadie Bridges



# 2022-2023 COLLEGE FYI PROGRAM







**CARL ALBERT**  
— STATE COLLEGE —  
EST. 1933

# 2022-2023 COLLEGE FYI PROGRAM



## STUDENT QUOTE -

"The benefit of being in the College FYI program is that you get to meet so many new people and you're part of a community. My favorite part is being able to come to people who understand what it's like and know you're not struggling alone. It's a lot of work being in college and FYI gives you the opportunity to play games and take stress off yourself. You also learn a lot of new things. If you're new to college, and you're stressing or worried about if you're going to make friends, then FYI might just be for you!"

-Christyl Morgan





# COLLEGE COUNSELOR

Katie Herr is the College FYI College Counselor at Carl Albert State College (CASC). Katie is a Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Tribal Member from Poteau, Oklahoma. She graduated with her associate degree from CASC, then went on to earn her bachelor of arts in psychology from Northeastern State University in May 2013. Katie previously worked in the mental health field for four years and has been in her current position with Choctaw Nation since June 2017.

**Top Photo:** Justice Spears was on the esports team at CASC and was chosen as a student highlight. He commended the College FYI program as a huge part of his success while at CASC stating, "It made it easier having someone help me sign up for all the scholarships I qualified for. The weekly \$10 Travel Plaza voucher allowed me to have a snack during late night esports training."

**Middle Photo:** Camp Chahta Family Night is our kick-off event for the upcoming school year. It's always exciting to meet the incoming freshmen and welcome them to the Viking family.

**Bottom photo:** One of Katie's favorite parts of the College FYI program is watching current and former students achieve their goals. Former students choose to volunteer at events such as the Camp Chahta Student Advice Panel to give advice from a student's perspective and ease some of the anxieties that come with being an incoming freshman.



KATIE HERR



# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

## Show Up for Yourself

CASC College FYI students celebrated Mental Health Awareness Month in May 2023. Events were hosted to educate students on the importance of self-care and provide resources to use when times got tough. CASC College FYI hosts various activities throughout the year around the topic of mental health including mental health jeopardy and a student favorite "Stress Less Week" before final exams.

Choctaw Nation Behavioral Health plays a huge role in partnering with us to provide relevant techniques and resources that students can use to ease some of the stress that college can bring.



## Chahta Sia Hoke!

Every November, CASC College FYI partners with Carl Albert to host a week-long celebration of Native American heritage. This year, students were able to participate in activities including pottery, social dancing, and stickball. In addition, the Native American Club hosted a movie night and the Joe E. White library hosted the "All Things Sacred" Art Exhibit.

We appreciate the Choctaw Nation Cultural and Historic Preservation Departments for partnering with us to make these events a success.



# 2022-2023 STUDENT AMBASSADORS



**MARIAH BYRD**



**JUSTICE SPEARS**



**BRAYLIN HARPER**



## STUDENT QUOTE -

"The benefits of being a College FYI Student Ambassador are the \$250 bookstore voucher and being able to stay involved in the program. My favorite part of being an ambassador was seeing some of the people that I grew up with and being able to help them get into college. I would encourage other students to become an Ambassador because it helps you stay involved, boosts your resume, and it's really fun!"

-Braylin Harper



**Kattie  
Bailey**



**Amya  
Barnes**



**Kayeton  
Barnes**



**Zeke  
Baxter**



**Brittany  
Bloxham**



**Sadie  
Bridges**



**Aaron  
Cantu**



**Kaden  
Dill**



**Hanna  
Fox**



**Christa  
Garcia**



**Hunter  
Gibson**



**Landry  
Gist**



**Grady  
Grimmett**



**Joseph  
Heavener**



**Robert  
Hettinger**



**Alexia  
Hopson**



**Paityn  
Janway**



**Brandon  
Labor**



**Emma  
Lawson**



**Joanna  
Lloyd**





**Emma  
Luman**



**Tori  
Marable**



**Samara  
Markwardt**



**Kate  
Marshall**



**Alexandra  
Martindale**



**Shayleigh  
McDaniel**



**Cheyenne  
Miller**



**Idaysia  
Mills**



**Christyl  
Morgan**



**McKenzie  
Noahubi**



**Maggie  
Oliver**



**Sommer  
Owen**



**Evan  
Piovesan**



**Taloe  
Raven**



**Blake  
Seyler**



**Jansen  
Steele**



**Gracyn  
Thompson**



**Dylan  
Torres-Parker**



**Zachariah  
Torres**



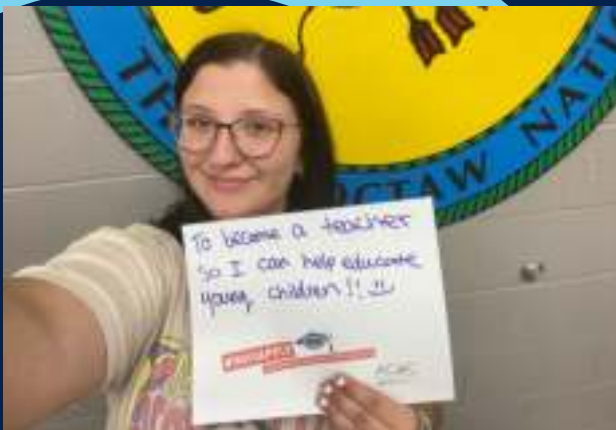
**Rain  
VanTassel**

# STUDENT WORKER

## HOPE TOLIVER

Pre-Elementary Education Major

Hope participated in the College FYI program at Southeastern before transferring to Carl Albert. She was selected as CASC Student Worker due to her hard work and friendly attitude. Hope helped with weekly CFYI events including taking photos, preparing gift bags, giving advice to current CFYI students, and other office duties. She was a huge help throughout the year!







# EASTERN

OKLAHOMA STATE COLLEGE



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College Freshman Year Initiative



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# 2022 CAMP CHAHTA





# 2022 CAMP CHAHTA



## STUDENT QUOTE -

"A couple of benefits of Camp Chahta are the friends you get to meet and the feeling after Camp Chahta when you know where everything is and everybody else is just kind of looking around. My favorite part was getting to make new friends and going into this experience with them. I would most definitely encourage anyone who can, to join the program. The benefits and everything you get from it; it's too good not to join."

-Student Survey





# 2022-2023 COLLEGE FYI PROGRAM





# 2022-2023 COLLEGE FYI PROGRAM



## STUDENT QUOTE -

"Some of the ways this program has really benefitted me is with the grade checks and the once a week meetings to make sure everything is turned in on time. It's a great reminder to keep you up to date. My favorite thing is the free food! I would recommend this program because it's a blessing and an honor to have someone there checking on you."

-Student Survey

## COLLEGE COUNSELOR

Melissa Juarez is the College Counselor at Eastern Oklahoma State College (EOSC). Melissa is a Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Tribal Member from Panola, Oklahoma. She earned her associate degree from Eastern Oklahoma State College, then went on to obtain a bachelor's degree in chemistry and a master's degree in clinical rehabilitation/clinical mental health counseling from East Central University. Melissa previously worked in education and has been in her current position with Choctaw Nation since January 2017.

**Top Photo:** Melissa received the Community Partner of the Year presented by Eastern Oklahoma State College Student Support Services in April 2023.

**Middle Photo:** The College FYI staff attends multiple events throughout the school year to discuss the program and encourage students.

**Bottom Photo:** Melissa attended the NODA Region IV Conference at the University of Texas-San Antonio in March 2023.



MELISSA JUAREZ





# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

## FINANCIAL LITERACY

Each February, Eastern hosts Financial Literacy Week. College FYI partners with the college to provide activities and games related to various financial topics.

Students enjoy playing the M&M Budgeting Game and the Game of Life. Working through a budget has shown to be an eye-opening experience for students.



## COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECT

Easter serves as the time of year when Eastern College Freshman Year Initiative completes a community service project. This year, students provided a handwritten note to the elders of Choctaw Nation District #6. The cards were distributed to 55 Choctaw households.

# 2022-2023 STUDENT AMBASSADORS



**MATTHEW GOODSON**



**TAYLOR MCGILL**



As freshmen at EOSC, Matthew and Taylor were great participants in the College FYI program. They were eager to attend events and happy to step-up when a need arose. Matthew and Taylor were also terrific assets as Ambassadors during Camp Chahta. They assisted in various activities without hesitation and were wonderful mentors to our freshmen students. Taylor graduated early from Eastern in December 2022 and is currently attending Oklahoma State University. Matthew graduated in May 2023 and will continue his education at OSU, as well.

- Melissa Juarez, College Counselor





**Kinley  
Bratcher**



**Landen  
Burke**



**Curtis  
Derryberry**



**Riley  
Garrison**



**Alexis  
Green**



**Rocky  
Hass**



**Ty  
Hoffman**



**Keeley  
Johnson**



**Annika  
Lake**



**Fischer  
Long**



**Tanner  
Mings**



**Logan  
Moore**



**Kaden  
Mora**



**Trenyce  
Noah**



**Murphy  
Peterson**



**Kylie  
Smith**



**Taylor  
Thurman**





**Kai  
Tom**



**Brittany  
Welch**



**Ashley  
Williams**



**Raegail  
Wilson**



**Melissa  
Wren**







Southeastern Oklahoma  
State University



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College Freshman Year Initiative



Southeastern Oklahoma  
State University



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# 2022 CAMP CHAHTA





# 2022 CAMP CHAHTA



## STUDENT QUOTE -

"This program was super beneficial for me my freshman year. It's just an extra person and community there making sure you're getting all the things you want accomplished, and more!"

-Anna Ritter



# 2022-2023 COLLEGE FYI PROGRAM





# 2022-2023 COLLEGE FYI PROGRAM



## STUDENT QUOTE -

"Some things I enjoyed about the program are the weekly gas vouchers, free food, and all the opportunities presented to us like scholarships, job opportunities, and assistance to get you through the first year."

-CJ Jones



Southeastern Oklahoma  
State University

# COLLEGE COUNSELOR

Kelsi Rainwater served as the Southeastern Oklahoma State University College Counselor for the College Freshman Year Initiative. Kelsi is a Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Tribal Member from Marietta, Oklahoma. She earned her bachelor of science from Southeastern in December 2017 and master of science in Native American Leadership, also from Southeastern. Kelsi has been with Choctaw Nation since November 2017 and College FYI from January 2019 to November 2022.



KELSI RAINWATER

**Top Photo:** Kelsi enjoyed attending SE Live to promote the College FYI program. Kelsi was also selected as 2022 NextGen Under 30 award recipient based on her leadership and service within the College FYI community of students.

**Middle Photo:** Kelsi Rainwater is featured with College FYI students, Hailie Pittman and Alyssa Wisener, Senior Manager, Jamie Irwin, Senior Director, Paula Harp, Program Coordinator, Lindsey Henry, and District 9 Councilman James Dry at the Native November tailgate and game day experience.



JAYCI BRAUDRICK

Jayci Braudrick is the College Counselor for College Freshman Year Initiative at Southeastern Oklahoma State University. Jayci is a Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Tribal Member from Caddo, Oklahoma. Jayci earned her bachelor of science degree from The University of Tennessee-Martin in 2020. Jayci is currently studying to obtain her master of science in Native American Leadership at Southeastern Oklahoma State University. Jayci previously worked in the social service field for two years and has been with College FYI since November 2022.

**Bottom Photo:** Jayci and Lindsey attended the NASA Downlink event to promote College FYI. This event was in collaboration with NASA and Choctaw Nation's Education Departments.

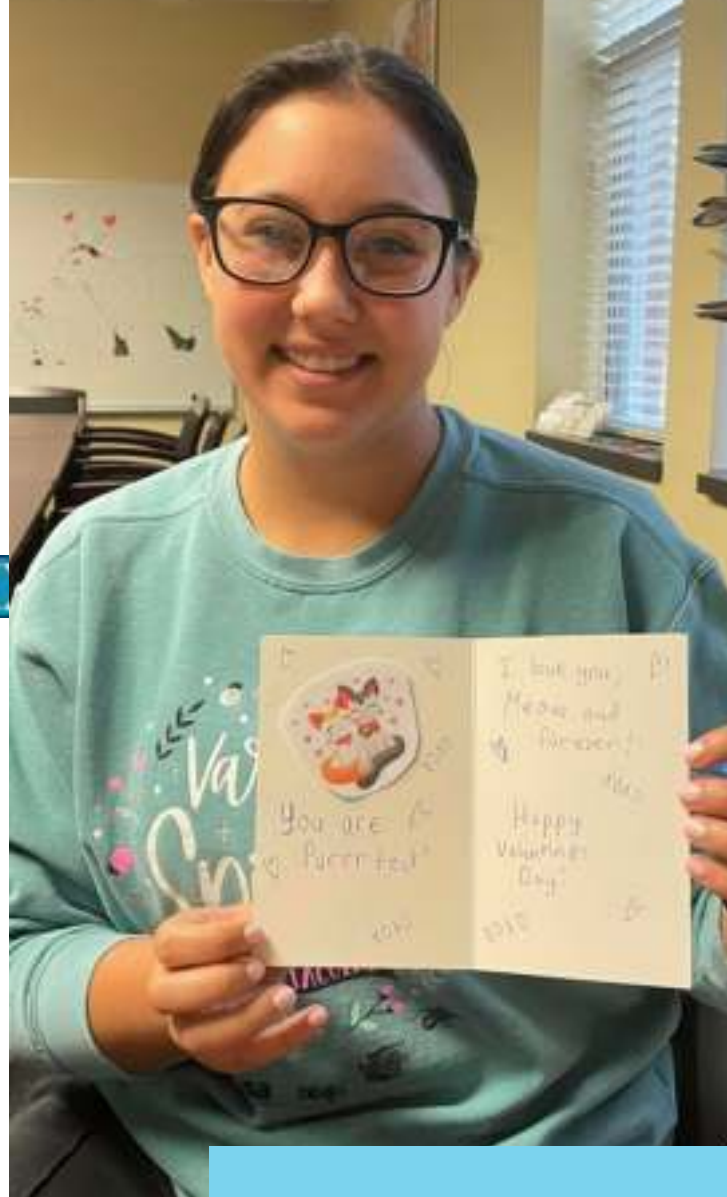




# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

## Heart of Service

Southeastern College FYI students enjoyed making Valentine's Day cards for a local nursing home as a community service project. The nursing home residents appreciated the cards and loved that they were handmade because it made it extra special. This activity gives students the opportunity to take a break from academics and give back to their community. The College FYI program hosts 1-2 community service projects each year per campus.



## 'Oh the Places You'll Go'

College FYI students at Southeastern Oklahoma State University celebrated Dr. Seuss with a special workshop. Students enjoyed the unique breakfast of green eggs and ham. They also read 'Oh the Places You'll Go' which inspired them to consider their educational and career journey. They explored career options relevant to their college major. We look forward to seeing the places they will go!



Southeastern Oklahoma  
State University

# 2022-2023 STUDENT AMBASSADORS



**CORDELL PALMER**



**JONATHAN RITTER**



**MARSHALL LUDRICK**



## STUDENT QUOTE -

"I loved being an Ambassador because it allowed me to get to know the new students and help them get acclimated to the college life. I would 100% recommend being an ambassador because of the impact you can make and it is so much fun!"

-Cordell Palmer





**Kylie  
Anderson**



**Carter  
Ansel**



**Tanna  
Boatright**



**Claydon  
Burch**



**Sterling  
Burkett**



**Josie  
Burns**



**Cameron  
Byler**



**Mykah  
Carlton**



**Brock  
Davis**



**Karlea  
Faught**



**Hunter  
Hamill**



**Conner  
Hammons**



**Treyton  
Hart**



**Kierra  
Hawks**



**Amber  
Holden**



**Logan  
James**



**Keeden  
Jones**



**Cristen (CJ)  
Jones, Jr.**



**Jayden  
Keyes**



**Grayson  
Kitchens**



**Casey  
Loman**



**Samuel  
Long**



**Caitlyn  
Ludlow**



**Kyler  
Marshall**



**Chelsea  
Maxwell**



**Dawson  
Meador**



**Patricia  
Molina**



**Aliyah  
Myers**



**Cayden  
Nassar**



**Alexandria  
Nicholas**



**Andrew  
Palmer**



**Zephan  
Patton**



**Hailie  
Pittman**



**Angelica  
Ramirez**



**Stormi  
Ramsey**



**Rachel  
Rentie**



**Rebecca  
Richie**



**Anna  
Ritter**



**Riley  
Royal**



**Rena  
Samuels**





Southeastern Oklahoma  
State University



**Choctaw Nation**

College Freshman Year Initiative



**Haley  
Shupert**



**Kenzie  
Singleton**



**Alaina  
Smith**



**Kaleb  
Smith**



**Santilla  
Smith**



**Tanner  
Stewart**



**MacKenzie  
Tipton**



**Robert  
Whiteaker**



**Kenzie  
Wilson**



# STUDENT WORKER

## CHEYENNE LEWIS

### Elementary Education

Cheyenne participated in the College FYI program at Southeastern Oklahoma State University. She was chosen as a SE student worker due to her dedication and positive outlook. Cheyenne assisted with weekly CFYI activities such as taking pictures, making gift bags, counseling current CFYI students, and performing other office tasks. She was a huge help all year long!







**Choctaw Nation**

College Freshman Year Initiative

# CONGRATULATIONS TO PAST PARTICIPANTS OF THE COLLEGE FYI PROGRAM!







**Choctaw Nation**

College Freshman Year Initiative

# 2023 COLLEGE FYI GRADUATES







**Choctaw Nation**

College Freshman Year Initiative

The College Freshman Year Initiative would like to extend a special thank you to our leadership, including:

Paula Harp - *Senior Director, School Programs*

Amanda Johnson - *Executive Director, Education*

Stacy Shepherd - *Executive Officer, Member Services*

Teresa Jackson - *Senior Executive Officer, Tribal Services*

Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr.

Chief Gary Batton

Tribal Council Members:

Thomas Williston - *District 1*

Tony Ward - *District 2*

Eddie Bohanan - *District 3*

Jess Henry - *District 4*

Ron Perry - *District 5*

Jennifer Woods - *District 6*

Joey Tom - *District 7*

Perry Thompson - *District 8*

James Dry - *District 9*

Anthony Dillard - *District 10*

Robert Karr - *District 11*

James Frazier - *District 12*

We are extremely thankful for the leadership throughout the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma for making this program available to our Choctaw Tribal Members.

**Yakoke!**

*College Freshman Year Initiative*





918-647-1423



918-465-1705



580-745-3314



# COLLEGE FRESHMAN YEAR INITIATIVE

The goal of the College Freshman Year Initiative (FYI) is to create a community among Choctaw students, their college campus, and our staff wherein freshman students are empowered to make informed decisions and develop academic and life skills to become confident, proactive, and accountable participants in their college education. In order to achieve this goal, we've placed Choctaw College Counselors on the campuses of Southeastern Oklahoma State University-Durant, Carl Albert State College-Poteau, and Eastern Oklahoma State College-Wilburton to closely assist Choctaw students throughout their freshman year and foster success through graduation.

If you are a first-time freshman, a Choctaw Tribal Member, and are considering attending one of these schools, please call our office today.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL **800.522.6170**



**Choctaw Nation**

College Freshman  
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[CHOCTAWNATION.COM](http://CHOCTAWNATION.COM)







## COLLEGE FYI INVITES YOU TO **CAMP CHAHTA**

The camp is designed to orient first-year students to college life and create a close-knit community of Choctaw students.



918.647.1423



580.745.3314



918.465.1705



For more information on the Camp Chahta scan the QR code or visit [choctawnation.com/services/college-fyi/](https://choctawnation.com/services/college-fyi/)

TOGETHER WE'RE MORE



# Choctaw Nation

College Freshman Year Initiative

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