

*College Freshman Year Initiative*

# *Connecting Choctaws*

**2021-2022**





# Choctaw Nation

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## 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.

## College FYI

# 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.

## Jamie Irwin





## FIRST GENERATION

62% (83/133) students served by the College Freshman Year Initiative are First Generation students. Eastern Oklahoma State College celebrated these students at First Gen Day. They often face unique challenges, and College FYI empowers students to work through those issues so they can achieve their goals.

**95**

95 Choctaw Tribal Members attended Camp Chahta in Fall 2021 across the three campuses.



## NASA INTERNSHIPS

The College Freshman Year Initiative partnered with associates from the Student Engagement team under MUREP (which promotes Native Americans in STEM) at NASA to bring a virtual workshop to CFYI students. Current and past students attended to learn about the elite internships available at NASA.

CFYI students ranked their overall satisfaction with the CFYI Program. Overall all three campuses, College FYI had a satisfaction rating of 98.9%.

**98.9%**



## College FYI

### Coordinator I

Lindsey Henry is the 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. Lindsey has been with the Choctaw Nation since March 2011 and College FYI since February 2016. She recently has been accepted into the Master of Science in Native American Leadership degree program.

## Lindsey Henry



# Meet our new Executive Director of Education!



Amanda Johnson is the Executive Director of Education. Amanda is a Choctaw Tribal Member from Coleman, Oklahoma . She received her bachelor's degree in Liberal and Applied Studies from Southeastern Oklahoma State University (SE). Amanda also earned her Master of Science in Native American Leadership from SE. In her previous role with Choctaw Nation, she served as senior director of child care and head start. Amanda is a first-generation college graduate who is passionate about education and her responsibility in carrying out her tribe's core values of faith, family, and culture.

## Amanda Johnson

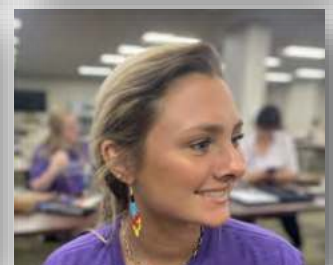




# CHIEF'S LEADERSHIP CLASS



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 community leaders, college/university administration, and tribal leaders to provide a valuable experience for our outstanding Choctaw college students.





**2021-2022**

**Participants:**

**Laney May**

**Laney Tiffie**

**Conager McBroom**

**Chayla Huggins**

**Jessica Robbins**

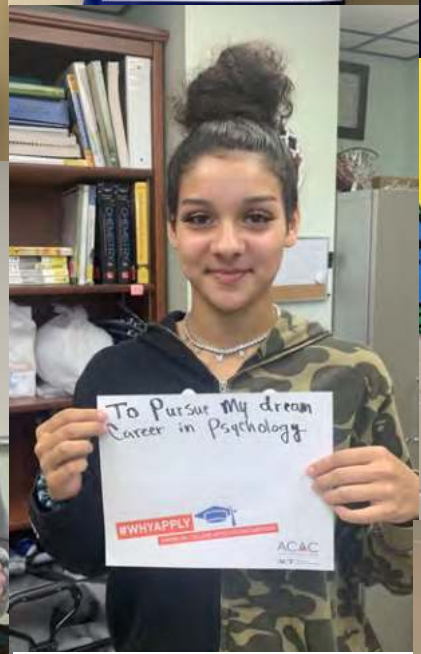


“CLC helped me build relationships with many new people, gain more insight about the Choctaw Nation, and develop a more rounded emotional view of myself and others.”

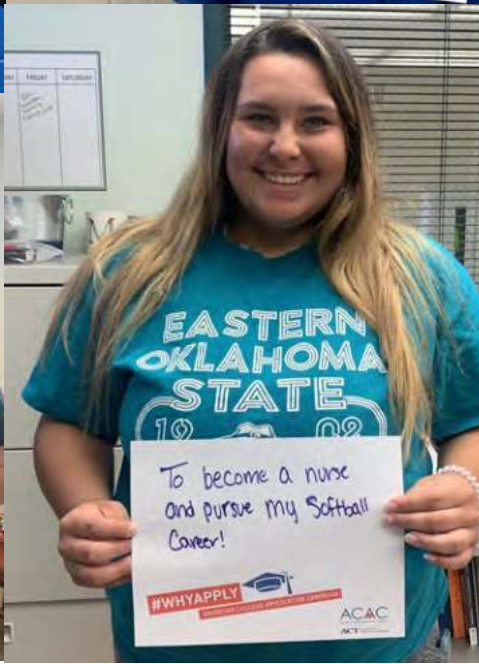
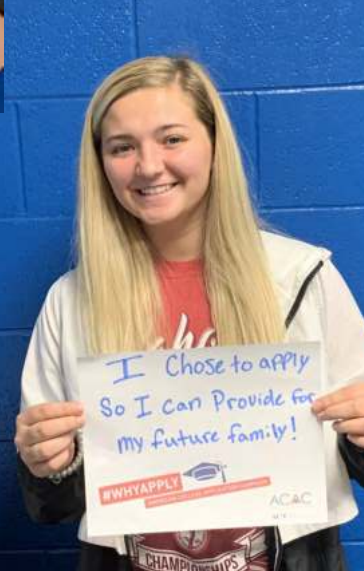
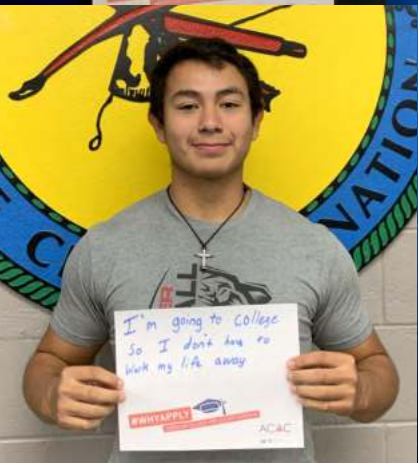
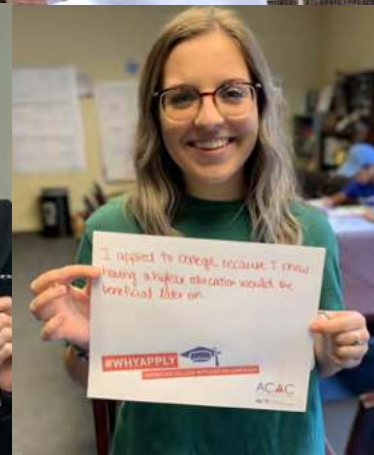
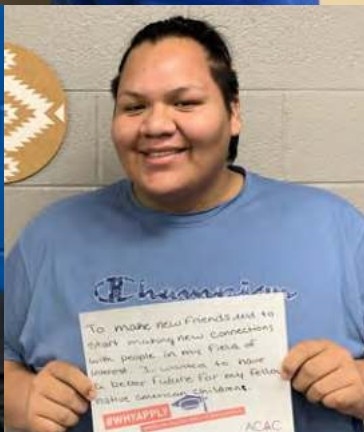




# Why our students chose to apply to college:









# CARL ALBERT STATE COLLEGE









# CARL ALBERT STATE COLLEGE CAMP CHAHTA







“[During Camp Chahta] I was nervous at first but Katie and the others made it easy for me. The scavenger hunt helped me learn the different places on campus.”  
– Student Survey





# College FYI

## College Counselor

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

Katie Herr



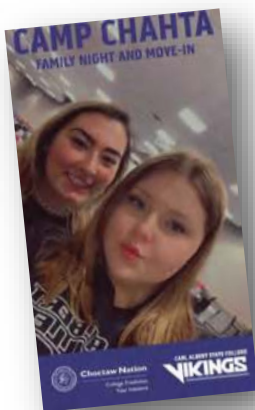


## Student Ambassadors

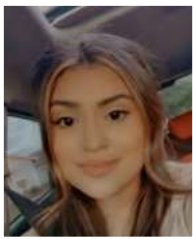
College FYI student ambassadors kicked off their sophomore year by helping with Camp Chahta freshman orientation. Ambassadors had the opportunity to lead games, give advice in the Student Advice Panel, and assist in the campus scavenger hunt. After Camp Chahta, Ambassadors assisted with projects such as "No Tricks, Just Treats", Native American Heritage Month activities, group meetings, and promotional events. These students were selected due to their friendly personalities, leadership abilities, and performance in the CFYI program as freshman. It's been so rewarding to watch them give back and transform into a leadership role. We're so proud and thankful for their hard work and dedication!

From Top to Bottom:

**Hannah Caldwell**  
**Kayleigh Emmert**  
**Caleigh Reading**  
**Enchil Tonihka**







Cody Fitzer



Kamryn Baker



Allison Benefield



Lakysia Bluford



Olivia Brennan



Mariah Byrd



Xoey Carshall



Heaven Clark



Abygail Collins



Kylah Colwell



Kyleh Colwell



Shadie Crase



Dayton Crose



Gracie Darneal



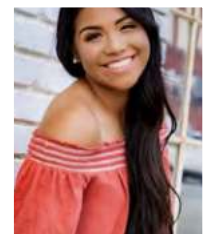
Matt Davis



Haley Durant



Kennedy Easley



Haley Edwards



Felicity Adams



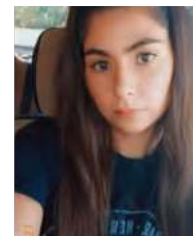
Samual Frederick



Triston Gonzalez



Braylin Harper



Brianna Holbert



Destini Hutchinson



Trystan Ingle



Corianne Johnson



Mattie Jones



Kara Jordan



Harmony Lee



Alston Lloyd

## 2021-2022 CASC Participants



Destiny McGee



Trinitti Mendez



Faith Montgomery



Kinsey Morris



Klaira Morris



Cole Nix



Blayne Rasha



Audrey Rocha



Corey Spears



Justice Spears



Caitlyn Stacy



Morgan Stout



Noah Sumpter



Jonah Vance



Raven Woolbright

“(Katie) would keep me up to date on scholarship opportunities and ways to get more free money... just having someone like that was like having a campus mom... I can’t recommend it enough.” -Asher Billy



## CAMP CA

College FYI Program Manager, Jamie Irwin, College Counselor, Katie Herr, and CFYI Student Ambassadors participated in Carl Albert’s High School Senior Day, “Camp CA”. During this time, College FYI representatives met with incoming freshmen at the Viking Network event and encouraged them to take advantage of the wonderful opportunities available through College FYI. Students were also able to win prizes and talk to CFYI Student Ambassadors about their experiences at CASC.



## CHOCTAW FLAG DAY

Choctaw Nation CFYI was honored to attend a ceremony on the Carl Albert campus to celebrate inaugural Choctaw Flag Day. Special yakoke to Choctaw Nation Career Development, CASC President Jay Falkner, District 4 Councilman Jess Henry, and veterans Paul Perry and Ed Hendricks.



## MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

CASC CFYI students met with Abbey & Bryan Rowley, Choctaw Nation Behavioral Health, to learn techniques to manage stress. Students were provided with mental health resources then created a self-care action plan that was personal to them. Students were encouraged to place this in a location where it is visible to remind them to practice healthy stress management.



# EASTERN OKLAHOMA STATE COLLEGE

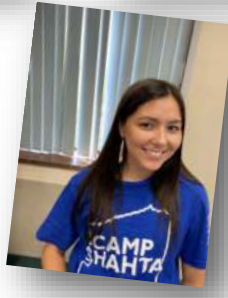








# EASTERN OKLAHOMA STATE COLLEGE CAMP CHAHTA







“I liked that we could all come together and relate to each other once a week. There was great food we got to eat and great activities that we got to participate in.” —*Student Survey*





## College FYI

### 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.

## Melissa Juarez





## Student Ambassador

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As a freshman at EOSC, Kaci was a great participant in the College FYI program. She was eager to attend events and happy to step-up when a need arose. Kaci was also a terrific asset as an Ambassador during Camp Chahta. She assisted in various activities without hesitation. Kaci was accepted into the Nursing program at Eastern and will begin Fall 2022.

— Melissa Juarez



Kaci Ratliff

I absolutely love Melissa and I am so grateful for everything she has done for me! -*Student Survey*

**100%**

19/19 of the EOSC students who finished the Spring 2022 semester plan to return to EOSC in Fall 2022.

EOSC students finished their freshman year with an average cumulative GPA of 3.09.

**3.09**



# 2021-2022 EOSC Participants



Hannah Abeyta



Annah Amos



Kylee Anderson



Michael Baker II



Trenton Barnes



Kaya Crouch



Madison Daniels



Meadow Erwin



McKinley Feazle



Matthew Goodson



Chelsea Holloway



Bryce James



Taylor McGill



Shaylee Medina



Kaitlyn Rigsby



Aspen Rivers



Bailey Stewart



Makayla Thompson



Linsey Whisenhunt



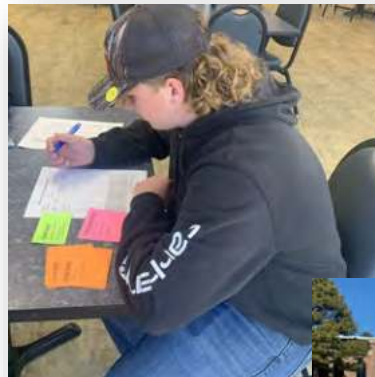


## TWOSday

Tuesday, February 22, 2022 was a unique day in history, and many area public schools chose to celebrate. EOSC College FYI students received cookies specifically designed for 2-22-22 as a welcome break from the day-to-day grind of classes.

## 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. The Cash Cab can be found around campus throughout the week, as well. Students receive prizes for correctly answering financial-related questions.



## Community Service Project

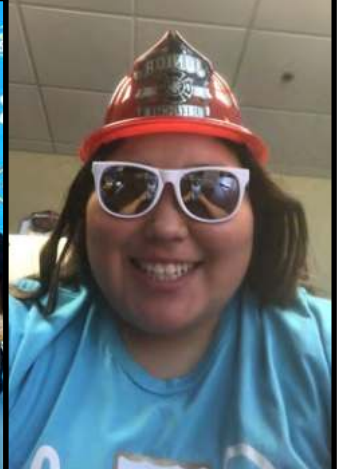
Easter serves as the time of year when Eastern College FYI completes a community service project. This year, students provided a handwritten note to the elders of Choctaw Nation District #6. The cards were distributed to over 50 Choctaw households.



# SOUTHEASTERN OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY









# SOUTHEASTERN OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY CAMP CHAHTA







“Camp Chahta was a very good thing for me because that is where I met my very first friends who have helped me along the way.”  
-Kya Daniel





## College FYI

### College Counselor

Kelsi D. Rainwater currently serves as the Southeastern Oklahoma State University College Counselor for the College Freshman Year Initiative. Kelsi is a Choctaw tribal member from Marietta, Oklahoma. She earned her Bachelor of Science degree from Southeastern Oklahoma State University in December, 2017. Kelsi has been with the Choctaw Nation since November 2017 and College FYI since January 2019. In December 2021, Kelsi completed her Master of Science in Native American Leadership at Southeastern Oklahoma State University.

## Kelsi Rainwater







**Chloe Miller**



## Student Ambassador

Chloe really stepped up to be a student ambassador for Camp Chahta. She rearranged her hectic schedule which included jury duty at the time to attend Camp the most amount of time. She bonded with the incoming students and even helped organize a sand volleyball camp so their first night on campus would not be lonely. She was able to answer all of the incoming students questions about SE.

— Kelsi Rainwater



## GATHERING OF NATIONS

Past College FYI students traveled to New Mexico for Gathering of Nations (national pow wow). These students, Jayda Janway, Shay James, Samantha Lopez, and Joshua Kitzrow, all participate in the SE Native American Student Association who sponsored their trip.



## CULTURAL CENTER

In Fall 2021, the CFYI College Success course was able to bus to the Choctaw Cultural Center. CFYI students toured the facility and ate traditional food at the Champuli Café before returning to campus.



## TAILGATING

SE students have the unique opportunity to attend the CFYI tailgate at select home football games. They are provided food and entertainment to show their school spirit on game day. The CFYI program hosted 6 total tailgating events. One with other CNO programs and associates and one with SE Native American Institute.





Tristin Blackburn



Desty Boatright



Braydon Brock



Jaxon Burwick



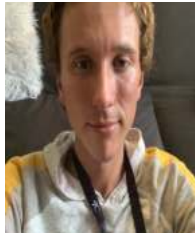
Lucas Cole



Hannah Compton



Kya Daniel



Matrix Dewbery-Jaynes



Adam Dodson



Karson Fields



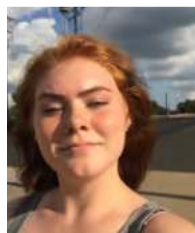
Colt Gandy



Jenna Gardner



Owen Guest



Kaylee Gurry



Zach Harper



Alex Jamison



Gavin King



Cheyenne Lewis



Marshall Ludrick



Braden Maloy



Addison McCortney



Michaela Michalk



Cole Mitche



Shakira Myers

# 2021-2022 SE Participants



Yasmine Myers



Rowdy Nimrod



Emi O'Steen



Danielle Paddor



Cordell Palme



Chandler Peters



Kaylee Pond



Jonathan Ritter



Salea Rock



Kayla Strong





Emilie Thiry



Kyler Thomas



Savannah Walley



George Williamson

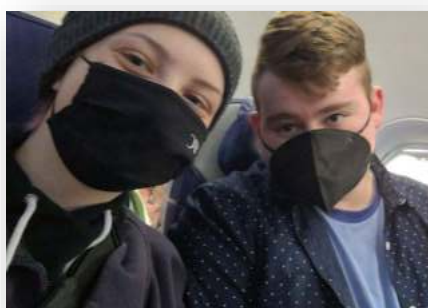


Cole Wilson



Kelly Wilson

## Student Leaders Highlights



Jenna Gardner and past student Brady Robinson competed in the National Speech and Debate Contest.

These students served as student senators for the Student Government Association their freshman year:

Tristin Blackburn  
Hannah Compton  
Addison McCortney  
Cordell Palmer  
Kayla Strong

Tristin Blackburn and past student Kaytlyn McCarter served the Sigma Sigma Sigma sorority as chairs for Founders Day.



In Fall 2021, Kayla Strong and Marshall Ludrick served as student athletic trainers during football season.



Hannah Compton, Emi O'Steen, and Jonathan Ritter all graduated from the President's Leadership Class.



Honors Program Students:

Gavin King  
Marshall Ludrick  
Addison McCortney  
Danielle Paddor  
Cordell Palmer  
Emilie Thiry  
Cole Wilson



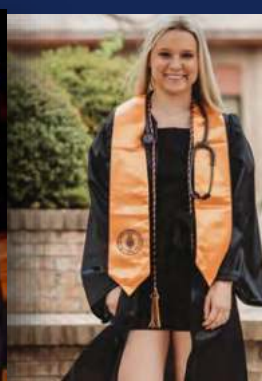
# Congratulations to past participants of the College FYI Program!



**86%**

86% of students that participate in College FYI complete a degree, certificate program, and/or start a career following their college career.

GRADUATION







**“I would like to thank the Choctaw Nation for the scholarships and the opportunities you have given me. I was an Ambassador for Camp Chahta and attended the [Chief’s] Leadership program during my time at college. I have learned so much about my heritage during these years at Durant, and this has given me a new perspective and a new appreciation about my culture. I will forever be grateful. The Choctaw Nation truly cares for their people. Thanks again for everything.”**

**-Robi-Von Barnett (featured in *Biskinik*, June 2022)**



**39 CFYI students have received degrees from the 2017-2018 class of CFYI. 2017-2018 class was the first class of CFYI. Some of these students have earned multiple degrees.**

**39**



# STUDENT WORKERS

Enchil Tonihka and Ashley Daney served as the CASC College FYI work-study for fall 2021 and spring 2022. They were a huge help with creating gift baskets, setting up for events, greeting guests, and completing tasks around the office. We're fortunate to have had their help and without them, the year wouldn't have run as smoothly. Congratulations on your graduation from CASC and we wish you the best of luck in your future endeavors!

— Katie Herr



Ashley Daney



Enchil Tonihka



As a freshman, Alyssa was very involved with College FYI and voiced interest in being the next student worker for the program. She has helped our program tremendously this year. From putting together goodie bags to answering students questions, she has done it all. She was quick to assist with setting up events. I have enjoyed Alyssa's hard work for the CYI program.

— Kelsi Rainwater



Alyssa Van Worth



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:

**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*



