

ACT Transforming Lives Award Nomination (for action)

BACKGROUND:

ACT is sponsoring the Transforming Lives awards again this year.

Every state-level nominee will have their story and picture included in an awards booklet that will be shared with legislators, the higher education community, and posted on the ACT website.

- Trustee Juanita Richards serves on the ACT Transforming Lives Committee and the local Transforming Lives Committee.
- To encourage an increase in nominations the process was simplified and added to the website based on committee recommendations.
- The BBCC Committee will meet soon to discuss celebrating the BBCC nominees locally.

The following nominees information will be reviewed by the trustees.

- Damon Barber
- Fatima Borjas
- Angela Moore
- Lizabeth Murillo Amaral
- Audra Pierce
- Colton Reynolds

Washington State

ACT
Association of College Trustees

Transforming Lives 2023 Nomination Criteria

Description

The ACT Transforming Lives Awards recognize current or former students whose lives have been transformed by attending a Washington state community or technical college. The ACT Awards Committee will select six keynote speakers from the nominations submitted by the Washington community and technical colleges.

All nominees will be invited to attend, at ACT's expense, the ACT Legislative Contact Conference (January 23, 2023), at the Olympia Hotel at Capitol Lake in Olympia), where they will be honored during the Transforming Lives Awards Dinner. Award winners will be the keynote speakers, and each recipient will receive a \$500 cash award from ACT. The students who are not selected as key note speakers will receive a \$200 cash award from ACT.

Every nominee will have their story and picture included in an awards booklet that will be shared with legislators, the higher education community, and posted on the ACT website.

Awards Criteria

Nominations must come from the student's board of trustees, based on the following criteria:

- The nominee may be:
 - a current or former Washington community or technical college student **[within 3 years (2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22) of completing a degree, certificate or transfer]**
 - Or a current student who is making significant progress toward completing a degree or certificate that is helping them prepare for success in their future endeavors.

- The nominee must share in written format (**maximum 600 words**) about overcoming barriers to achieve higher education goals and how the education and support received at their community or technical college was life transforming. **The following questions must be answered in order for the nomination to be eligible for consideration:**
 - ✓ **What compelled you to attend a community or technical college? And most importantly was there an individual(s) or program at the college you feel contributed to your success?**
 - ✓ **What was it about that individual(s) or program that made the difference in transforming your life? Please explain.**
 - ✓ **Were there any barriers or obstacles that originally prevented you from attending a community or technical college?**
 - **If so, please identify those barriers or obstacles and tell us what you did to overcome those barriers or obstacles?**
 - ✓ **What is next for you and what are your goals for your future?**
 - ✓ **If you could share one piece of advice for other students or for those who are unsure about their ability to attend a community or technical college, what would that be?**

Each college may develop its own process for soliciting and selecting nominations. One student from each college may be nominated by the local board of trustees. Multi-campus districts provide one nominee from each college in the district. **Once the board identifies its nominee, the college is encouraged to work with the nominee to edit/finalize the student statement for submittal.**

Nominations must include the completed nomination form, the student's final edited statement, a letter of support from the board of trustees outlining why the student's story was selected, and a head and shoulder photograph (300 DPI or higher) of the student. Materials must be sent electronically. The student's statement (600 word maximum) must be in a Word document.

Deadlines:

Nominations must be received by ACT by Friday, November 4, 2022

ATTN: Kim Tanaka at ktanaka@sbctc.edu

****Previous nominations submitted within the last 3 years are eligible to be resubmitted and reconsidered****

(Students previously chosen as ACT's keynote speakers are not eligible)

Awardees will be notified mid-December.

****Please note: all student stories and pictures will be published in the Transforming Lives Booklet and posted online. The booklet is widely distributed to Legislators, CTC Stakeholders and the Public.****

I was compelled to attend BBCC by my having been born in Moses Lake. You see my family moved to away to Yakima in 1989. My father did not attend College. I wanted to be a beacon for my community, for the town I was born in. I wanted money and advancement too, however that was actually a secondary desire. I knew the money would be there.

Several individuals inspired me to keep pursuing knowledge. A biology teacher, Survey of Biology, who specialized in DNA was my first glimmer of hope. She was a part time teacher, but her head was screwed on tight. It was like watching a well-oiled machine dancing circles around me, and I wanted to be part of that. Later on, in Algebra, Dr. Wallace's math videos spiked my attention. Sure, there was Sarah, and the others, but his videos clicked with me. I'm now in Calculus and he's still running the show. And who could ever forget the vigor and spunk of my German teacher, Ms. McCarthy. Never haven taken German before, her material was top notch. Teachers like these are what make education possible, tangible. Here's the material, here are the basics, and this is absolutely what you can do with it. I can still see the unzipping of the DNA strands in my head and the Auschwitz's fences.

As far as barriers, the list is quite long. From ripped body parts to online quizzes without material, FASFA associates telling me all hope was lost, and my own inner battles, I got pretty drained. But my spark is still lit. I'm not sure how I'll scrounge up enough materials to fly, but I can see someone waving to me at the finish line. Time has helped smooth out much of what had clogged my gravy boat. In two years, having separated from my last employer, I've had time to recover much of my health. While in lockdown, internet schooling has become much more stream lined. I really hope the current format with the recorded lessons and homework located in the modules never changes. The system changes after Covid I would have to say became my miracle. Teachers and students are now both accountable for material.

Having now completed my degree, I've found myself in the market for a bachelor's. I'm actually more relieved that I've gotten this far, than elated. Some of the materials like "Barn Burning", by William Faulkner have really opened my eyes to perspective. If one man makes his own wages by sales, and is really good at it, must one work for another? Yet without resources, how does one advance genetic research and not start at the beginning? In any case I'll be pressing on to attend Central. The parties are a bit over my head, but the school falls inline with my budget. I'd really like to continue on with Computer Science and John Hopkins. I mean with all of these space race enthusiasts; someone has to write the code for them. Why not help make code that establishes the industry standard?

One piece of advice I'd like to share is this: Despite communication barriers, despite logistical inequalities, regardless of physical prowess, keep your nose to the grind stone. Not everyone is as capable, although some are. Not everyone cares as passionately as you, although some do. Not everyone knows what you've been through, but some may. At the end of the day, it is really up to you to make the cogs move. Remember that Christine got the part, even though Carlotta was better built for it.

Transforming Lives Nominator Form

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Nominator: Jennifer McCarthy

Nominee: Damon Barber

How long have you known the nominee?

One year +

In what capacity do you know this nominee?

Damon was my German student for all three quarters during the 2021-22 school year.

What impresses you about this nominee?

Damon is a smart, interesting, curious and considerate student and human. His willingness to share his knowledge with his instructor and the other students and to be helpful in all matters in our German class last year were impressive starting on day one of Fall quarter. His willingness to step in and help is really exceptional.

What personal and professional attributes do you see in the nominee?

1. Curiosity
2. Hardworkingness
3. Caringness for others
4. Tenacity
5. Willingness to step in and help when necessary

Share a specific insight or personal anecdote about the nominee that describes why you think this is a great nominee.

Damon came to German class every day last year and participated wholeheartedly, helping me out with computer issues (of which there were quite a few), and simply being a nice guy. We started out as a hybrid class, changed into completely online, and then hybrid again. Damon kept a positive attitude and was a great role model for the other, younger German students. When our final class day (in Zoom) arrived in June 2022, and his instructor did NOT arrive (the electricity at our home had been shut off for

maintenance right before our 8am class so that I had no way of joining the class in Zoom), Damon took up the mantel, and led the class in the usual activities in my stead. He chose to take on the role of Instructor so that his classmates would be able to participate in their last day of German class. He is truly a sweet man, a great student and a caring human being.

Any additional information you want to share?

The nominee must share in written format (maximum 600 words) about overcoming barriers to achieve higher education goals and how the education and support received at their community or technical college was life-transforming. **The following questions must be answered in order for the nomination to be eligible for consideration:**

1. What compelled you to attend a community or technical college? And most importantly was there an individual(s) or program at the college you feel contributed to your success?

-Attending a community college allowed me to stay close to home and the fact the community colleges are less expensive helps me get a higher education without expending all my resources.

2. What was it about that individual(s) or program that made the difference in transforming your life? Please explain.

-Jody Bortz and Tom Willingham are the people who have made the most impact in my college experience. They believe and encourage me to always do better and more than anything they have given me the support I need. Additionally, WES provided me the funds that I needed to complete my AA and now they are helping me to further my education.

3. Were there any barriers or obstacles that originally prevented you from attending a community or technical college? If so, please identify those barriers or obstacles and tell us what you did to overcome those barriers or obstacles?

-Main barrier as for many students was money. I was a single mom, unemployed on government assistance with many health problems. My mental health was declining at that time and Jody was always there to encourage me. I was able to transition from a broken low self-esteem student to a more confident and positive person. I was able to help others as well when I became a Peer Advocate coach for the PAC program at BBCC.

4. What is next for you and what are your goals for your future?

-Well, currently I work as a Program Assistant for Workforce Education Services (WES). I now work for the program that helped me become who I am today. I want to give back to the college and the community part of was given to me. My goal is to complete my Bachelor's degree here at BBCC.

5. If you could share one piece of advice for other students or for those who are unsure about their ability to attend a community or technical college, what would that be?

-There are lots of opportunities for growth and to get a higher education in community colleges. You just have to set aside the stigma. There are many funding options that you may be eligible

for. Community colleges work in partnership with other community agencies that may be able to provide extra funding for you to get a higher education.

"A year from now you will wish you had started today." Karen Lamb

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Nominator: Dawnne Ernette

Nominee: Fatima Borjas

How long have you known the nominee?

2 weeks

In what capacity do you know this nominee?

Fatima is my student in ENGL & 101 this fall 2022 quarter

What impresses you about this nominee?

I am impressed with her drive, dedication, and classroom leadership

What personal and professional attributes do you see in the nominee?

1. Personal excellence
2. Dedication to goals and success
3. Empathy for classmates
4. Strong self-awareness
5. Excellent communication skills

Share a specific insight or personal anecdote about the nominee that describes why you think this is a great nominee.

Fatima told me her story. She began in GED, transferred to college classes, became a BBCC employee, and will go on to the BAS program. She exemplifies exactly what community college should be striving for in student success.

Any additional information you want to share?

Fatima is just a truly powerful individual and I am honored to have her in my class. She will accomplish many more great things.

1. I wanted to go to my local community college, Big Bend Community College, to get a fresh start as an adult. I wanted to get an education and learn the tools needed to become a successful person. Looking back now, I feel that BBCC has helped me become more confident in my ability to achieve my goals. The TRIO SSS program has been a major contributing factor to my success. All their advisors have offered me help when I have been in need. If it wasn't for this program, I don't think my experience as a student would have been as promising.
2. The continuous support TRIO SSS provides has transformed my life. I enjoy how they have regular meetings and how we can stop by the office to study and ask questions with anything involving life or school. This program also makes sure to check in. They reach out and remind me they are there for me. I have had a rough couple of years. My dad passed away, my mother's gravely ill, and my grandmother also has health problems. I am my family's main caregiver and have had to balance this responsibility and school. Then my living situation took a serious turn and I was about to be homeless. I reached out for help and the TRIO helped me find resources. Now I have found a job, and an apartment, and am still balancing my class schedule.
3. I come from a low-income family who hasn't had anyone achieve higher education. The entire process was new to me and I wasn't sure if I would be able to make it happen. Before I decided to go back to school as an adult, I had overcome a major challenge in life, drug addiction. It was a lot of hard work, determination, and focus, but I no longer wanted to have that life. I stayed strong and have been clean for over six years now. I am very proud of this accomplishment. This achievement shows that I can pull through difficult situations and rise into a success story. I want people to know that it is possible to make positive changes and turn their lives around for the better. It just takes determination, hard work, and having a support system.
4. Right now, I am focusing on balancing school, work, and family. I am currently enrolled in the Bachelor's in Applied Management degree at Big Bend. Completing this degree will open many opportunities career wise so I can support myself and my family. I hope to continue being a contributing member of society and lead by example. After I attain my bachelor's degree I want to work towards a master's degree.
5. My advice to students' is – don't give up. School is tough, but the feeling of accomplishment is worth it. To know that you kept at it while things were difficult makes the experience even more valuable. If you are struggling, reach out and find resources. You'll be surprised how much support there is for a multitude of situations. Don't be afraid to ask for help that is what school programs are there for. The college wants you to succeed. They will do as much as possible to help you find solutions. For those who are unsure about their ability to attend college; I recommend setting up an appointment with an advisor to see what options are available to you and your situation. It never hurts to see what opportunities are there. Give it a chance because the result is worth all the effort. Find a program like TRIO and get started!

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Nominator: Veronica Guadarrama

Nominee: Angela Moore

How long have you known the nominee?

1.5 years

In what capacity do you know this nominee?

TRIO Student Support Services participant

What impresses you about this nominee?

Her strength and resiliency

What personal and professional attributes do you see in the nominee?

1. determined

2. caring

3. hard working

4. motivated

5. kind

Share a specific insight or personal anecdote about the nominee that describes why you think this is a great nominee.

Angela is a nontraditional student who came back to BBCC after overcoming difficult challenges to better her life. She persevered in her academics during the pandemic and graduated with her Associate in Applied Science: Administrative Professional Services. And, just this fall she started our Bachelor in Applied Management program. She has done all of this while grieving the loss of her father and taking care of sick family members.

Any additional information you want to share?

Angela has overcome true challenges. During her time at BBCCC I have seen her grow so much, especially in her confidence to succeed.

1. What compelled you to attend a community college? What individuals or programs contributed to your success?

I had originally attended BBCC as a running start student while in high school. Due to my mental health, I was forced to drop out and was placed on academic suspension. However, thanks to TRiO Upward Bound, and the admin at the community college, I was able to reinstate my enrollment and have been attending on and off ever since. I believe the reason I returned to BBCC after attending other universities online is because I had a support system from the start here. I felt welcomed and supported by staff, instructors, and our TRiO UB team.

2. What was it about the individuals or programs that made a difference in transforming your life?

This is a tough question because it is very personal. I was always made to feel welcome here. I knew that this was a place that was here to see me succeed, where barriers were able to be broken. On top of that, Anita De Leon, Program Director of TRiO UB, always guided me and made sure I knew that I was on my own journey. Just because my timeline of school looked different than others, didn't mean that I was falling behind. I was able to understand that school will always be there, but your health and wellbeing should always come first. This was something that has always stuck with me and motivates me to keep going in to earn my bachelor's degree.

3. Were there any obstacles that originally prevented you from attending college? What did you do to overcome these obstacles?

Yes, there were plenty of obstacles that set me back throughout my journey of attending college. It started at a young age for me- since my junior year in high school I have been fighting to attend college and obtain a degree. It took me about 4 years of trying other schools before returning to BBCC. As stated before, my mental health required a lot of effort and sacrifice which included failing courses and needing to appeal my status at BBCC. All my life I have struggled with a mood disorder, depression, and anxiety. It took a long time for me to realize this, which led to dropping out of school. In addition to dealing with my mental health, my family was also trying to learn what mental health was and how it affects individuals in different ways. Just because there is no physical damage, does not mean that someone is not suffering. It took years for me to return to Big Bend Community College, but once I returned, I was able to understand what triggered me, what I needed to do in order to be a successful student, and with the help of the TRiO Team, I felt like I could conquer anything. Because I had all my health records and was able to prove that I really had so much going on in my life, I was able approved to be a full-time student again. This is one of my biggest accomplishments in my life. Being vulnerable and telling a stranger my story was terrifying at first, but it helped me heal and make peace with my troubles. I now look back and realize that was one of the first steps towards my journey of healing.

4. What is next for you and what are your goals for the future?

Next is graduation! (Woohoo!) Graduation is this Spring and I could not be more excited. I know that once I have this bachelor's degree, I will feel accomplished. It feels like I've been trying at this for years and I can finally say I did it. Because of the childhood trauma I have, I have never been able to accomplish anything. I start things and am never able to follow through, this will be the first real accomplishment for me. I hope to keep sharing my journey

with other students that look like me, talk like me, come from the same background as me, struggle with their mental health like me. So that they know, anything is possible. You can work hard and achieve your goals.

I hope to start my career in business, maybe corporate. We shall see what the future has in store.

5. If you could share one piece of advice for other students who are unsure about their ability to attend community college, what would that be?

My biggest advice would be to give yourself grace, find a group of people or a mentor to keep you motivated, and lastly believe in yourself. Give yourself grace because no one is perfect, and you are bound to make mistakes. AND THAT'S OKAY. From these mistakes we learn the most and continue to keep growing.

Find a group of people or a mentor to keep you motivated- this can be your friends, classmates, study groups, TRiO programs, or even a professor or counselor. All my life I have always resorted to finding a mentor, it has helped me every step of the way. For a long time, I thought this to be a weakness, but having support is so crucial to your success! I know I would not be here without the help from my TRiO UB team, my mentors, and family.

Lastly, believing in yourself. This is a tough thought for a lot people because we tend to focus more on the things, we do wrong than the things we do right. I think it's so important to have faith in yourself because just like you are your biggest critique, you are also your biggest motivator! Be kind to yourself and know that you can do anything you set your mind to. I know that this is such a cliché thing to say, but I have learned as I get older that your resilience and ability to keep going is brave and courageous. Society has embedded in us this pretty cookie cutter image of what life "should" look like and that's all wrong. Your journey is the unique and that's a beautiful thing.

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Nominator: Anita De Leon

Nominee: Lizabeth Murillo

How long have you known the nominee?

12 years

In what capacity do you know this nominee?

Liz was a TRiO Upward Bound participant for 4 years and is currently employed as a full-time Program Assistant for TRiO UB at BBCC.

What impresses you about this nominee?

What personal and professional attributes do you see in the nominee?

1. Friendly

2. Resilient

3. Driven

4. Multi-tasker extraordinaire

5. Persevering

Share a specific insight or personal anecdote about the nominee that describes why you think this is a great nominee.

Liz is motivated and driven to achieve her educational and career goals. Her educational path has been untraditional but one that has shaped the amazing young woman she is today. She is inspired to help students through their educational journeys and pay it forward for all the guidance and support she has received.

Any additional information you want to share?

She is in the 2nd year of the Bachelor of Applied Management program at BBCC!

1. What compelled me to attend community college was learning I had a knack for working with kids and that I wanted to get my education degree so I could work with kids. I was volunteering in my son's life skills classroom and was told that I had a knack for working with kids on the spectrum, and that I should go for my education degree with a minor in SPED. So, I met with Jenny Nighswonger an advisor at Big Bend Community College and learned what steps I should take to start the program. So, I started community college working on my AA in early childhood education and then after I finished that program, I started my associates in arts and science DTA degree. I got highest honors in both programs.
2. A program that helped me be successful and was a godsend was TRIO SSS and my advisor through TRIO Jasmine. She helped me by creating an academic plan, so I knew what classes to register for and for which quarters. She would also advocate for me when I was struggling in class due to my learning difficulties. She even helped me with my scholarship essays I needed to write, so I could get scholarships.
3. The main obstacle I had in school was going back to school after being out of school for so long. Trying to find the time to do school in between being a mom. I struggled finding time to do schoolwork while juggling my sons many Dr. appointments. The way I got around it was I just made sure I scheduled his Dr. appointments during the day so I could work on my schoolwork in the evening while my husband watched our son. I also had my son's caregiver in the evenings as well that helped with my son. Now don't get me wrong being a full time mom I struggled with school and juggling my son, he would distract me and many times I finished my school work last minute but I got it all done and turned in and got great grades on my schoolwork.
4. My next goal is to go to Central Washington University and be apart of the teacher certification program and complete my education degree in Elementary Education with my minor is Special Education. I want to then go on to teach life skills in Moses Lake at one of the elementary schools. Even if it doesn't happen right away, I will still go for any teaching job in an elementary school. My goal is to become a teacher no matter what.
5. If I could share one piece of advice for other students that are unsure of their ability to attend community college, it would be don't hold yourself short. You are more capable of attending a community college than you think. I struggled here and there, especially in math, but I got through my classes and earned myself highest honors in my degree. I was able to complete college with two AA degrees and start at CWU with all my prerequisites completed. If you want some advice, it would be to get yourself an advisor a good one and listen to them. A good program to start with is TRIO they have great advisors that check up on you and know this much you can do it if you put your mind to it. Try and also have family support when going to school it helps right now I'm doing it with the support of friends and my sons caregiver but I'm able to do it because of them.

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Nominator: Veronica Guadarrama

Nominee: Audra Pierce

How long have you known the nominee?

3 years

In what capacity do you know this nominee?

TRIO Student Support Services participant

What impresses you about this nominee?

Her mother's strength and devotion

What personal and professional attributes do you see in the nominee?

1. hardworking
2. resilient
3. dedicated
4. passionate
5. caring

Share a specific insight or personal anecdote about the nominee that describes why you think this is a great nominee.

Audra came back to school as a non-traditional student to work with children with special needs. During her time at BBCC she overcame personal self-doubt and built a strong mindset. Not only did she achieve her goal of completing her Associate in Applied Science: Early Childhood Education, but she stayed at BBCC an additional year to complete her Associate in Arts & Science. She now truly is an individual who believes in her ability to succeed.

Any additional information you want to share?

Audra plans to continue her education and become a teacher who supports children with special needs in our community.

1. When looking for colleges to attend, I compared many different factors: the size of the college, the program and degrees offered, and the cost of attendance. These were all aspects I used to decide where to continue my education after high school. While exploring my options, I learned that community colleges are smaller than universities, some offered the program I was interested in pursuing, and they were much cheaper than attending a university. These elements meant a lot to me as a smaller college felt more like home as I grew up in a small community with a small school. When looking to continue my education in higher education, I wanted to seek a degree in aviation and I quickly learned that there were options available at community college. With pursuing a degree in aviation as a commercial pilot, I knew it wasn't going to be cheap, but I wanted to find a college that could make it somewhat affordable and community colleges were able to make my degree choice attainable and affordable. The program and individual that contributed to my success at the college was the Workforce Education Services and Kim Jackson.
2. The Workforce Education Services were able to offer the assistance needed to make my higher education opportunities more realistic and provided tuition assistance allowing relief for me as I did not have the additional stress of paying for tuition. Kim Jackson, the Director of Student Programs, contributed to me by providing job opportunities that worked with my class schedule and pushed me to grow in tremendous ways. While working for Kim, I was able to overcome my fear of public speaking, understand the inner workings of a college, and work as a team with the other members of the Associated Student Body. These were life-changing experiences that will benefit my future endeavors.
3. One of the major barriers that once prevented me from attending community college was figuring out how to afford it. Another obstacle that I had was becoming shy and not outgoing enough to make friends or come out of my comfort zone. I overcame these barriers by finding jobs that worked around my schedule and the Workforce Education Services assisted me in finding a grant that could aid in paying tuition. Kim was able to support me in coming out of my comfort zone to experience and try new possibilities. I never thought that I'd be able to speak publicly, but I was able to overpower this fear by giving speeches to small groups that gradually got bigger. These types of experiences helped me grow out of my comfort zone and boost my confidence.
4. This last year, I decided to not continue with my degree in aviation as it was not the correct fit for me as a career. I was able to graduate with my private pilot's license and an associate's in arts and science. Now, I am continuing my education to achieve a Bachelor's in Operations Management which I plan to pursue a career in after I have graduated.
5. If I was able to offer any advice to a future student who is unsure about attending community college, I would encourage them to go out of their comfort zone, do what excites them, don't be afraid of any obstacles, be resilient, and conquer any obstacle that may stand in the way. It is also important to come out into the World, meet new people, and build a network, a network will be the key to success.

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Nominator: Kim Jackson

Nominee: Colton Reynolds

How long have you known the nominee?

Over 3 years

In what capacity do you know this nominee?

Student, Student Worker, ASB Officer and ASB President

What impresses you about this nominee?

Colton has grown so much as an individual, student and student leader in the past three years here at Big Bend. This happened because he stepped out of his safety bubble and challenged himself to new levels, especially public speaking, and became a great leader and servant to his fellow students.

What personal and professional attributes do you see in the nominee?

1. He is a hard and dedicated worker, always willing to do far more than what was required of him and his role.
2. He is compassionate - always caring about others and wanting to help them.
3. He took his responsibilities seriously and was very conscientious
4. He is everyone's friend - students, staff and faculty included.
- 5.

Share a specific insight or personal anecdote about the nominee that describes why you think this is a great nominee.

Colton was not comfortable in the slightest concerning public speaking. He got his fill and then some as an ASB officer and President. He overcame his fears and anxieties and grew tremendously as a result of this.

Any additional information you want to share?

Colton worked 2-3 jobs throughout his time at Big Bend. He was a self-supporting student in the aviation program. In his last year, he was also balancing a BA degree program at a University, while juggling

classes here, flying, ASB responsibilities and working many hours as a server at a local restaurant. And doing well with his grades!