

Find out more about our graduating seniors on pages 5-7!



UB 11th-grade students participated in an ACT Seminar to prepare for the ACT. Learn more about it on page 10!

ST. OLAF COLLEGE

TRIO Upward Bound *Messenger*

Spring 2026

Volume XXXVIII, Issue #3

wp.stolaf.edu/upward/

Welcome, New Upward Bound Students!

We are excited to begin introducing some of our newly admitted students. Please take a few minutes to get to know them and join us in welcoming them to the UB community.

Abdurahman joined UB to be part of a supportive community and to prepare for college and beyond. At Central, his favorite subject is Marketing, which makes him want to pursue marketing as a major in college. When asked about his favorite type of music, he mentioned Jazz. Abdurahman is most excited to attend the different field trips offered by UB!



Abdurahman - Central

Ahlanna wanted to join UB because she wants to be the first in her family to receive a college degree. At home, Ahlanna likes to sing and draw! In school, Ahlanna's favorite subject is history, and she hopes to become a lawyer. During her time in UB, Ahlanna is looking forward to meeting new people!



Ahlanna - Highland

Saadayah joined UB to receive support in attending college and succeed in STEM. In the future, Saadayah hopes to become a biomedical engineer! In her free time, she likes to draw, read, play games, and do other things! When asked about her favorite movie, she said *Weak Hero*. Saadayah looks forward to being successful in the future and meeting new friends while being in UB.



Saadayah - Central

IN THIS ISSUE:

- Graduate Update* page 2
- New Student Meeting* page 3
- New Student Orientation* page 4
- Spring is in the Air* page 4
- Senior Spotlights*. page 5 - 7
- UB Calendar* page 8 - 9
- ACT Prep*. page 10
- UB T-shirt Design Contest* page 10
- SLC Winter Social* page 11 - 12
- Virtual FAFSA Night* page 12
- Mentor Spotlight* page 12 - 13
- Scholarships* page 13



Eh Kyaw - Humboldt

Eh Kyaw wanted to join Upward Bound to prepare for college and improve his education. In school, his favorite subject is science, which he hopes to continue as he is interested in agriculture. In his free time, Eh Kyaw likes to play video games and soccer. Eh Kyaw is most looking forward to preparing for and bettering his future through his participation in UB.

Melinda decided to apply to the UB program to experience college life and receive support from the UB staff. In her free time, Melinda likes to listen to music and draw. If she had to pick a favorite artist, it would be Lana Del Rey. In school, Melinda likes science, and she hopes to become an osteopathic physician. Melinda is most looking forward to exploring college and earning UB stipends!



Melinda - Central

New Upward Bound Students Continued...



Gianna - Creative Arts

Gianna applied to be in UB to help improve her future. She likes to listen to many genres of music, including alternative, rock, electronic, and more. In school, Gianna likes art, English, and science. Her favorite book series is “Wings of Fire” by Tui T. Sutherland. When asked what she is most looking forward to while being in Upward Bound, she is excited for the summer program.



Sueyan - Highland

Sueyan joined UB because he wanted to receive college help and get more opportunities, like volunteering. He likes to listen to soft pop but is open to listening to every type of genre. Outside of school, Sueyan likes to hang out with his friends and play sports. During his time in UB, he is looking forward to meeting new people and developing his study habits.



Cheela - Humboldt

Cheela decided to apply to the program to receive support in attending college. His favorite sport is volleyball, which he also plays! Cheela likes STEM-related classes and wants to become an aerospace or chemical engineer in the future. He is looking forward to learning new things related to college and school during his time in UB.



Sawserpho - Highland

Sawserpho joined UB to receive assistance with attending college and improving his study habits. In his free time, Sawserpho likes to play video games or read. If he had to pick a favorite book, he would say “The Arc of Scythe.” For his future career, Sawserpho hopes to become a dentist! In terms of what he is most looking forward to in UB, he looks forward to meeting new people and enjoying his school life.



Sabrin - Humboldt

Sabrin joined UB for the opportunities the program offers! At school, her favorite subject is English. If she had to pick a favorite book, it would be “The Hunger Games.” In her future, Sabrin hopes to become a surgeon. What she is most looking forward to experiencing in UB is living at St. Olaf College and gaining college experience.



Abby - OWL

Abby joined UB to improve her academic skills, gain new experiences, and receive assistance in getting into a four-year college. In her free time, Abby likes to play volleyball, write, make jewelry, and more! In the future, she hopes to become a psychologist or something in healthcare. During her time in UB, Abby is most looking forward to meeting new people and attending the six-week summer program at St. Olaf!

Graduate Update: Richer Moo

By: Aye Bra Tha

This month, we're happy to share an update on UB alumna Richer Moo and what she's been doing since graduating high school.

Richer graduated from Humboldt High School in 2022 and went on to attend St. Olaf College. She will earn her Bachelor's degree in Race and Ethnic Studies with a Family Studies concentration in May 2026. Richer chose this major because she wants to learn about different experiences and understand how society and culture shape us. She also hopes to work with people from many backgrounds.

When asked about her favorite college memory, Richer shared: "One of my favorite memories of college is learning and performing multicultural dances both at school events and in the wider community." During her four years at St. Olaf, she held student jobs, tutored, interned, and served in student organizations. Reflecting on what graduating means to her, she said: "Being a first-gen, graduating from college to me is resilience, breaking barriers, and a validation of my parents' sacrifices."

Graduate Update Continued...

When asked if college was what she expected, Richer reflected: "Before entering college, I saw college as a place for higher education, preparation for a career, and exploration. I thought college students had life all figured out. While some of that is true, what they don't tell you is that it's not always straightforward. You may find yourself in a loop, changing majors and interests, balancing academics and other responsibilities. You will not have it figured out right away. College is full of unknowns. Embrace the uncertainty of college."

Looking back on her UB experience, one of Richer's favorite memories is playing card games in the lounge with other students. She shared that UB helped her prepare for college by offering academic support, test prep, college application assistance, financial aid guidance, campus visits, and workshops on a range of topics. Her advice to current UB students is to focus on their own journey. She believes that once you do this, you can achieve anything you set your mind to.

Thank you, Richer, for sharing her update, and wish her well as she finishes her last semester at St. Olaf!



New Student Meetings

By: Tzolquin Pinedo

The Upward Bound (UB) staff is excited to welcome our newly admitted students into the St. Olaf Upward Bound program. Their first glimpse into the program came in January during a mandatory after-school tutoring session at one of our five high schools: Central, Creative Arts, Humboldt, Highland, or Open World Learning. This was the perfect opportunity to ask questions, become acquainted with other new students, and review UB expectations! Here are a few things that were covered in the New Student Meeting:

Upward Bound Probation:

- * All UB students are admitted to the program on a probationary basis and must complete the following criteria within the first 60 days of their acceptance:
- * Complete UB admissions curriculum assignments
- * Complete necessary program forms (i.e., Student Responsibility Form)
- * Maintain a "C" or higher in all classes
- * Attend the Study Skills Seminar
- * Attend New Student Orientation with a parent/guardian

Stipends:

Upward Bound students are paid a monthly stipend for participating in the program. New students will be eligible to earn stipends once they have completed all requirements of their 60-day probationary period. Stipends will be paid via direct deposit.

Students, if you do not have a bank account, UB staff can help you set one up through our partnership with Blaze Credit Union or at your local bank.

Program Expectations:

UB students are held to high expectations, and commit to the following:

- * Attend weekly tutoring and meet with UB advisor monthly for grade checks
- * 100% attendance at all UB events
- * Maintain a "C" or higher in all classes
- * Complete all "admission curriculum" assignments before being taken off probation
- * Participate in the annual summer program every summer, including the summer after high school graduation
- * Enroll in college for the fall semester immediately following high school graduation

UB advisors had a wonderful time meeting with all the new students at their high schools. We are excited to welcome our new students and look forward to working with them closely throughout their high school journey!

You are Invited to New Student Orientation

What: New Student Orientation

Where: St. Olaf College

When: Saturday, April 25, 2026, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Who: All newly accepted UB students and at least one parent/guardian

Join us for the 2026 New Student Orientation on the St. Olaf College campus! This event will provide families with a better picture of the different services Upward Bound (UB) will provide students over the next few years. During orientation, students and families will have the opportunity to hear more about our academic services and the upcoming Summer Program! We will have a full day of activities that will orient you to the program and provide you and your student with an introduction to the college process.

Breakfast, lunch, and transportation to and from St. Olaf College will be provided. Coach buses will pick up students and their parent(s)/guardian(s) at Central High School at 8:00 a.m. and will return families to the schools at 4:00 p.m.

Other Orientation Highlights:

- * Take a tour of campus and see where UB students will stay over the summer
- * Have breakfast and lunch catered by our nationally recognized campus dining hall
- * Question and answer time with UB's full-time staff
- * Meet UB alumni and hear about their college experiences

Please remember, this event is mandatory for ALL new students accepted during the 2025-2026 academic year. Please contact UB immediately if you have concerns about attending.

Spring is in the Air

By: Mari Avaloz

Spring is finally here! As the days get warmer, we want to remind students to stay on track. Some of you may already be feeling like you want to get outside, hang out with friends, and try something new. But don't let the sunshine distract you from your responsibilities! Remember, the time to relax is Spring Break. As we will soon enter the fourth quarter, don't forget that your grades are still critical for your academic journey, no matter what grade you're in.

Here's why this spring matters, for each of you:

9th Graders:

Welcome again to Upward Bound! You're still adjusting to a new school, and if your first half of the school year didn't go as well as you'd hoped, this is your chance to turn things around. Now is the time to lean on UB to help you keep your grades up. You might think the ninth grade isn't crucial to college, but believe it or not, colleges start looking at your grades now, beginning with freshman year. A strong finish this year shows growth and signals that you're serious about your future.

10th Graders:

Can you believe you are almost done with your sophomore year? You're almost halfway through high school—how exciting is that? It might not feel like a big milestone, but this is the time to build your momentum. This year's grades matter for opportunities like the National Honor Society, summer programs, and scholarships. Keep working hard and growing your resume. Your future self will thank you.

11th Graders:

The college application process is just around the corner. The grades you earn this spring will be the final full set that colleges see before you apply, so they carry serious weight. Stay on track, challenge yourself with advanced courses, and reach out to UB for support when you need it. This summer is your most important one yet—you'll be visiting colleges, writing essays, and strengthening your application. Attendance is mandatory, and we're not accepting excuses.

Bridge Students (Seniors):

Congratulations on your college acceptances! But don't relax just yet—you haven't graduated. Final high school transcripts still matter. Colleges can—and do—revoke admission offers if students stop taking their coursework seriously. Remember: an acceptance letter is a conditional offer based on your continued success. Slacking off now can put your future at risk. You don't want to start college on academic probation... or worse, not start at all. Finish strong!

As we head into this final stretch, remember the basics: Go to class. Be on time. Turn in your work. Smile. Have fun. Learn something new. And as always, reach out to us if you need support—and keep making good decisions!

Senior Spotlights

Each year, Upward Bound (UB) celebrates the achievements of our senior students. This year, there are 28 bridge students from our five target schools. We are excited to share their stories and post-secondary plans. We hope you enjoy reading about the seniors that we are highlighting this month!

Julianne Ya, Central, Team Nou

I applied to the University of Minnesota -Twin Cities, Duluth, Rochester, Morris, and the University of St. Thomas. I have been accepted to all schools, and UMN - Twin Cities is my number one choice at this time. One of my favorite UB memories is spending time in the dorm, talking with my friends and the dorm staff. As a graduating senior, I will miss the constant encouragement and support from UB that pushed me to grow academically and personally. The guidance from the UB advisors and the structured environment helped me stay motivated, focused, and confident in my abilities. UB gave me the tools, discipline, and mindset to aim high, and I'll always value the impact it had on my goals and future. For my Bridge summer, I am looking forward to the late nights studying with my friends in the lounge and soaking up these last moments before heading off to college in the fall. Some advice I would give to other UB students is not to be afraid to ask for help and take advantage of the support systems available to you. It's okay not to have everything figured out, especially as a first-generation student. Building strong study habits, staying on track, and using tutoring and mentorship opportunities early can really help. Most of all, believe in yourself, even when your goals feel far away. With support and determination, they are achievable! To the seniors graduating alongside me, I'm so proud of us and everything we've overcome to get here. To the students coming up after us, keep dreaming big and trust your journey. And to the UB advisors, thank you for your constant support, patience, and belief in us. We wouldn't be here without you!

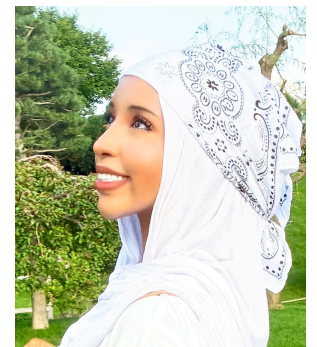


Mohamed, Highland Park, Team Tendor

So far, I have applied to Concordia, Gustavus, St. Thomas, St. Olaf, the University of Minnesota - Twin Cities and Duluth, and Augsburg University. I've been accepted to Augsburg, St. Thomas, UMD, Gustavus, and Concordia. Right now, St. Thomas is my first choice. My favorite UB memory was the boat ride during the Chicago bonus trip. As corny as it may sound, I will miss the friends I made along the way in UB when I graduate. I am looking forward to interacting with my bridge classmates and the UB underclassmen this summer! My advice to UB students is to make memories worth remembering and share them with others.

Zarina, Central, Team Aye Bra

So far, I have applied to St. Catherine University and Concordia University so far. I've been accepted to Concordia and am still waiting to hear back from St. Kate's. Right now, I do not have a first-choice college. My favorite UB memory is sharing experiences with my friends, especially our annual trip to Valleyfair. It's always a fun day, and it means a lot to share those moments. I will miss the support from the UB advisors, staff, and the friends I've made along the way. UB has always been a place where I felt encouraged and motivated to reach my goals. For my Bridge summer, I'm most looking forward to preparing for college and becoming more independent before starting my freshman year. I want to encourage UB students to take advantage of every opportunity that UB offers. Step out of your comfort zone, be yourself, and don't be afraid to ask for help.



Shouyee, Central, Team Zookong

I've applied to the University of Minnesota Twin Cities, Augsburg University, and Metro State University. I have been accepted to all schools, and my first choice school is UMN - Twin Cities. My favorite UB memory is the bonus trip to Chicago last summer. Once I graduate, I will miss the UB staff, friends, and community. This summer, I am excited for my bridge internship. My advice to UB underclassmen students is to explore their interests and get involved.

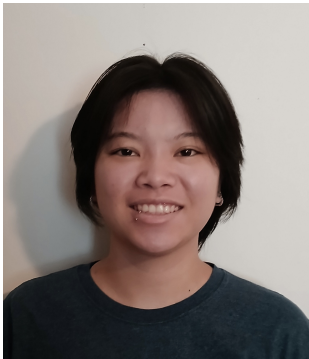


Erick, Highland, Team Tzolquin

I've applied and been accepted to the University of Minnesota - Twin Cities, St. Olaf College, University of St. Thomas, Concordia College, Gustavus Adolphus College, and Concordia University. At this time, UMN - Twin Cities and St. Thomas are my top choices. My favorite memory of UB is the Chicago trip from this past summer. I will miss the summer program, the dorm experience, and the friends I have made. I am looking forward to my Bridge internship this summer! My advice to current UB students is to enjoy every moment you have at UB!

Monica, OWL, Team Aye Bra

I've applied to Augsburg University, College of Saint Benedict, Concordia College, Concordia University, St. Paul College, Gustavus Adolphus College, Saint Louis University, St. Olaf College, University of Minnesota Twin Cities, and University of Wisconsin-Madison. So far, I have been accepted to all schools and am waiting to hear back from St. Olaf, UMN - Twin Cities, and UW- Madison. My top college choice is St. Olaf. My favorite UB memory is spending time with my peers and taking part in evening activities. After graduation, I will miss seeing my friends and the UB staff members. I look forward to spending time with my friends during my Bridge summer. My advice for UB students is to begin writing your college essay early!



Yuuri, Central, Team Nou

I have been accepted to several colleges, including Dakota County Technical College, Anoka Technical College, Metropolitan State University, Minnesota West - Granite Falls, Minneapolis Community and Technical College, Minnesota State University, Mankato, North Hennepin Community College, College of St. Scholastica, and Western Technical College. My top college choice is Dakota County Technical College. My favorite UB memory is going to Valleyfair and the Chicago bonus trip. I am most looking forward to the evening activities for my Bridge summer. After graduation, I will miss spending time with my friends and talking to the staff.

Sanna, Highland, Team Tendor

I have applied and been accepted to the University of Minnesota Twin Cities, St. Olaf College, University of St. Thomas, Augsburg University, Hamline University, and Concordia University. My first choice of college is UMN - Twin Cities. My favorite memory of UB is hanging out with my friends in the dorm. I am looking forward to earning college credits and participating in the Bridge activities for my Bridge summer! When I graduate, I will miss my peers and mentors, as well as the activities, because they were so much fun. My advice to UB students is to find the FUN in mundane activities.



Zen, Creative Arts, Team Aye Bra

I have applied to the University of Minnesota Twin Cities, Hamline University, Hennepin Tech, Century College, and Dakota County Technical College, and I am waiting to hear back from all of them. Right now, UMN - Twin Cities is my top college choice. My favorite memory of UB was being "wowed" by everything when I first joined. I will miss everything and everyone in UB when I graduate. For my Bridge summer, I am looking forward to being with everyone one last summer! My advice for UB students is that you will hit bumps in your journey, but you are the one who makes your journey, so keep going and don't stop until you can look at who you are and what you've become.



Gada, Highland, Team Zookong

I applied to the University of Minnesota - Twin Cities, University of St. Thomas, St. Olaf College, Gustavus Adolphus College, Hamline University, St. Cloud State University, Saint John's University, Saint Mary's University, College of St. Scholastica, Augsburg University, Indiana University Bloomington, University of Wisconsin - Madison, and The Ohio State University. I have been accepted to all schools except two on my application list. My top college choice is UMN-Twin Cities. My favorite memory of UB was singing Borderline with Ahmed and Erick. I am looking forward to this summer's theme. When I leave the program, I will miss all the UB staff! Stay SP and have fun!



Wilo, Central, Team Tzolquin

I have applied to the University of Minnesota - Twin Cities and Duluth, University of St. Thomas, Hamline University, Minnesota State University - Mankato, and New York University. I have been accepted to UMN - Twin Cities and Duluth, Hamline, and St. Thomas. My top college choice is UMN-Twin Cities. My favorite UB memory is staying in the dorm during the summer program; I will miss it the most when I graduate. I encourage UB students to get to know and connect with their peers in the program!

Brandon, OWL, Team Tendor

I have applied to Gustavus Adolphus College, University of Minnesota - Twin Cities and Duluth, St. Olaf College, and Connecticut College. I have been accepted to Gustavus, UMD, and Connecticut College. My top college choice is Gustavus. My favorite UB memory is volunteering at Feed My Starving Children and roller skating at Skateville, even though I wasn't great at it. When I leave UB, I will miss everything about it and the moments I've cherished over the last three years. I am looking forward to meeting new students, involving them in UB, and talking with students I haven't connected with yet. For the underclassmen, remember that going through the day is shorter than enjoying the day! Stay Positive!



Muskan, Central, Team Nou

I applied to New York University, University of St. Thomas, St. Catherine University, Gustavus Adolphus College, and MN State University, Mankato. I was accepted to all schools except for NYU. My top college choice is St. Kate's. My favorite UB memory is definitely the Chicago trip! I will miss spending the summer with friends and dorm staff, and I look forward to having FUN one last time during my Bridge summer! My advice to Upward Bound students is to stay committed even if you want to give up. UB provides valuable support, especially during junior and senior year.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Study Skills

Friday, March 20, 2026

9:00 am - 2:00 pm

Central High School

All New Students and Sophomores must attend

New Student Orientation

Saturday, April 25, 2026

8:00 am - 4:00 pm

Central High School (Bus Pick-Up Location)

All new students and parent/guardian must attend

Spring Mentor Event

Saturday, May 16, 2026

9:00 am - 2:00 pm

Central High School (Bus Pick-Up Location)

Upward Bound Calendar

March/April 2026

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
March 2	3	4	5	6	7
Mandatory Tutoring: Creative Arts	Mandatory Tutoring: Highland Park	Mandatory Tutoring: Humboldt & OWL	Mandatory Tutoring: Central		
9	10	11	12	13	14
Mandatory Tutoring: Creative Arts	Mandatory Tutoring: Highland Park	Mandatory Tutoring: Humboldt & OWL	Mandatory Tutoring: Central		
16	17	18	19	20	21
Mandatory Tutoring: Creative Arts	Mandatory Tutoring: Highland Park	Mandatory Tutoring: Humboldt & OWL	Mandatory Tutoring: Central	No School Study Skills	
23	24	25	26	27	28
Mandatory Tutoring: Creative Arts	Mandatory Tutoring: Highland Park	Mandatory Tutoring: Humboldt & OWL	Mandatory Tutoring: Central		
30	31	April 1	2	3	4
Mandatory Tutoring: Creative Arts	Mandatory Tutoring: Highland Park	Mandatory Tutoring: Humboldt & OWL	Mandatory Tutoring: Central		
6	7	8	9	10	11
Spring Break! No School! No UB Tutoring!					
13	14	15	16	17	18
No UB Tutoring UB Staff Attending Professional Conference					
20	21	22	23	24	25
Mandatory Tutoring: Creative Arts	Mandatory Tutoring: Highland Park	Mandatory Tutoring: Humboldt & OWL	Mandatory Tutoring: Central		New Student Orientation

Upward Bound Calendar

April/May 2026

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
April 27	28	29	30	May 1	2
Mandatory Tutoring: Creative Arts	Mandatory Tutoring: Creative Arts & Highland Park	Mandatory Tutoring: Humboldt & OWL	Mandatory Tutoring: Central		
4	5	6	7	8	9
Mandatory Tutoring: Creative Arts	Mandatory Tutoring: Creative Arts & Highland Park	Mandatory Tutoring: Humboldt & OWL	Mandatory Tutoring: Central		
11	12	13	14	15	16
Mandatory Tutoring: Creative Arts	Mandatory Tutoring: Creative Arts & Highland Park	Mandatory Tutoring: Humboldt & OWL	Mandatory Tutoring: Central		Spring Mentor Event
18	19	20	21	22	23
25	26	27	28	29	30
Memorial Day No School	No School	No School			

Upcoming Birthdays!



Goldberg - March 1
Faith - March 3
Amani - March 4
August - March 5
Sueyan - March 5
Sagal - March 15
Riley - March 16
Pae - March 25
Wyatt - March 28

Nueshilee - March 30
Wayne - April 1
William Her - April 3
Cheela - April 5
Dahlia - April 9
Jonathan - April 9
Saadayah - April 19
Justina - April 29
Muskan - April 30

Abril - May 1
Yuuri - May 5
Valeria - May 5
Abdurahman - May 7
Khalyse - May 12
Rafael - May 12
Eh Ku - May 21
Jermiah - May 30

Juniors Prepare for the Spring ACT

By: Tendor Norbu

Upward Bound (UB) offered a structured ACT Prep series to help juniors prepare for the official ACT exam that many students will take at their schools in March. The program was designed to provide students with strong practice, helpful strategies, and increased confidence before taking the real test.

ACT Prep sessions were held during students' mandatory after-school tutoring time. During each session, UB staff provided an overview of one section of the ACT, reviewed key test-taking strategies, and discussed common mistakes to avoid.

This year, UB utilized the Elevated Minds Plan, an online ACT preparation platform that allowed students to complete practice exercises during the sessions. After most meetings, students were assigned homework that included Enhanced ACT section practice tests so they could apply what they learned and continue practicing outside of the ACT Prep series time.

The ACT Prep series began with an overview session and continued with five weeks focused on each section of the exam:

Overview Week (January 5-8, 2026): Review of scores and overview of 5-week ACT Prep series

Week 1 (January 26-29, 2026): English

Week 2 (February 2-5, 2026): Math

Week 3 (February 9-12, 2026): Reading

Week 4 (February 23-26, 2026): Science

Week 5 (March 2-5, 2026): Writing

To ensure all students could participate, ACT Prep was offered both in person during after-school tutoring and online through Zoom for students attending online school or those who opted for virtual tutoring.

Students also had the opportunity to earn additional stipends for their participation. By attending sessions, completing practice exercises, and submitting Enhanced ACT practice test sections, students could earn up to approximately \$43 in additional stipends.

Through this series, UB juniors gained valuable experience with the ACT format, strengthened their academic skills, and learned strategies to approach each section with confidence. UB staff are proud of the effort students put into preparing for this test, and we wish them the very best as they take their official ACT tests.

Call for UB T-Shirt Design!

UB T-Shirt Design Contest

We are excited to announce that our Annual Summer T-Shirt Design Contest is officially ON! Every summer, Upward Bound students submit t-shirt designs for the chance to have their design selected for our annual Summer 2026 Program t-shirt. UB Students: Here are the rules for entering!

Submission Guidelines

- * Create a t-shirt design (front and back*) on CustomInk
- * The words "St. Olaf College TRIO Upward Bound" must be included
- * Email your design submissions to Tzolquin (pinedo2@stolaf.edu) by April 3, 2026

Don't miss out on this opportunity to share your creativity! We're excited to see what you come up with. The winning t-shirt design will be unveiled at this year's summer program!



Summer Planning is Well Underway!

By: Nou Yang

The UB summer program is just two and a half months away, and UB staff have begun planning for a fun and memorable summer. That said, we want to remind students of our program dates and share what to look forward to as you plan your summer!

For UB Bridge (seniors), SLC members, and new students, the summer program begins on Sunday, June 21, 2026. UB juniors and sophomores will begin the following day, on Monday, June 22, 2026. Please note that all summer bus pick-ups and drop-offs will be at Central High School. Sunday pick-ups will be at 6 pm, and Friday drop-offs will be between 12:15 and 12:30 pm.

During the July 4th holiday week, all students will go home on Thursday, July 2nd, at 11:30 am. There is no UB programming on Friday, July 3rd, and Sunday, July 5th. After the break, all UB students will be picked up at Central on Monday, July 6, 2026, at 6 pm.

This summer, Tendor will be on paternity leave. In his absence, we are excited to share that Nou will be teaching the Post-Secondary Exploration afternoon class! With her past experience in college admissions, Nou is thrilled to guide our rising seniors through their college exploration course and college visits this summer. To support our rising juniors as they prepare for the ACT test next spring, we are offering an ACT Bootcamp course. UB is happy to bring back several favorite classes, including French, Fun with Functions, Creative Writing, and Journalism! In addition, our Coding class will give students hands-on experience with robots recently purchased by the program. And as always, Friday Clubs will return, continuing to bring the fun and creativity our students look forward to each week.

UB has exciting evening activities planned for the summer program, such as bowling, going to the movies, a Saints game, and volunteering at Feed My Starving Children, so get ready for some fun!

Next, all Bridge students will take an English course, Science in World and Word, taught by Professor Forstner. This course is a blended reading seminar and writing workshop emphasizing audience awareness, research, argument, and text/image relationships. Students respond critically and creatively to literary journalism and scholarly literature as the course explores topics in science, technology, and the environment. The class will examine ways to effectively discuss research, both through language and storytelling. Assignments include observation essays, blog posts, infographics, and culminating feature essays.

Bridge students will also complete a paid one-week Job Shadowing experience on the St. Olaf campus or in the Northfield/Dundas area, giving them work experience in their field of interest. In the past, we have secured internships at Clean River Partners, Community Resource Bank, and Northfield Hospital & Clinics. Bridge students will receive a survey in April so UB can use the information to plan their Bridge summer and job-shadow experience.

Following the on-campus experience, UB will offer a bonus trip for underclass students (C/O 2027, 2028, 2029) who qualify. The UB bonus trip is set for Tuesday, July 28-Thursday, July 30, 2026. The trip location has not been determined yet, but we can guarantee that it will be both educational and fun! Please remember that an invitation for this trip will be offered to students who achieve perfect attendance during the summer program and adhere to all summer program rules and guidelines. Students who meet these criteria will receive an invitation for this exclusive opportunity by Friday, July 17, 2026.

As always, plan on bringing a positive attitude to Upward Bound ☺

The 2025 Student Leadership Winter Social

By: Tzolquin Pinedo

The Upward Bound Student Leadership Council (SLC) hosted its annual gathering in December to celebrate the end of the year and the beginning of Winter Break. SLC members began planning for the Student Leadership Winter Social months in advance to organize fun activities that all students could participate in. This gathering is one of the only times during the academic year that all UB students are able to come together as a program.

With the celebration came the time to choose the theme for the gathering. SLC members had to come up with a theme that would top last year's costume-themed gathering. After voting as a council, the theme Candyland was selected! SLC members arrived a couple of hours early to decorate the event space and to participate in their Secret Pal Gift Exchange! Students had a fun time shopping for each other and opening their gifts.

During the Winter Social, SLC President Julianne and SLC Vice-President Malt led a whole-group activity in the gym. SLC members gathered over 80 students to play a large game of Simon Says. While Malt and Julianne gave commands, other

The 2025 Student Leadership Winter Social Continued...

SLC members watched closely to see who would become a watcher. Despite the large group, it was a fun opportunity to have all students gathered and participating in one space.

UB students enjoyed a number of activity stations organized and led by the council. Some of the favorites this year were the photobooth, bracelet making, cookie decorating, fake tattoos, and, of course, the open gym! For lunch, students enjoyed Panda Express, and this year, Upward Bound received a very special surprise. The program received a special donation from Panda Express, which allowed students to take home meals at the end of the event for themselves and their families.

We hope that students enjoyed their time at the Student Leadership Winter Social. We look forward to the next time we are all together for the UB Summer 2026 Program!

Virtual FAFSA Nights

By: Zookong Lee

As we reach the end of the academic year, one important step in the college application process for seniors is completing the 2026-27 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The FAFSA application is an important task that seniors planning to attend college must complete to receive federal financial aid to help pay for college. In January and February, Upward Bound hosted virtual FAFSA nights to help our UB seniors and their parent(s)/guardian(s) complete this important application.

During these sessions, UB students and their parent(s)/guardian(s) participated in a FAFSA workshop with one of our UB staff. First, UB presented on financial aid and reviewed a senior-year timeline and key steps each student will complete during the financial aid process. The presentation provided important information about completing the FAFSA and preparing for additional financial aid paperwork required to enroll in college in the fall.

Following the presentation, UB staff assisted each UB senior to complete their FAFSA, and by the end of the workshop, both the students and family left knowing how FAFSA will use their financial information to determine eligibility for federal grants, loans, and work-study funding. After submitted the FAFSA, their information was sent to the colleges and universities listed by the student so each school can create a financial aid package for them. For many of our UB students, financial aid packages play a major role in deciding which college they will attend.

Upward Bound would like to thank all our students, and their parent(s)/guardian(s) who took the time to attend our FAFSA event. In the coming weeks, UB staff will continue working with seniors to complete the CSS Profile and/or any additional financial aid forms required by their colleges and universities.

UB Mentor Spotlight: Let Let

By: Aye Bra Tha

We're excited to feature Let Let in our Spring Mentor Spotlight! This is Let's first year mentoring with Upward Bound, and we're thrilled to welcome her to the UB Mentor Program.

Let was born in Umpiem Camp, a refugee camp in Thailand, where she lived until the age of six. She moved to Minnesota in 2009 and has called both the East Side and Frogtown neighborhoods of Saint Paul home. After high school, Let attended the University of Minnesota, where she majored in Biology and minored in Pharmacology in the College of Biological Sciences.

Currently, Let works as a medical scribe with ECC Scribe and is an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) trainee with HealthPartners. She is also taking a course through the Regions Hospital EMS program to earn her EMT certification. Her career goal is to become a Physician Associate (PA). She chose this career path because she enjoys helping others and providing care and support to those in need. She also values the opportunity to work in both team and individual settings, which makes the PA role a great fit for her.

When asked why she wanted to become a mentor with UB, Let shared, "I was once a mentee under TRIO ETS. Having been a mentee myself, I understand the positive impact mentors can have on younger students. Motivating high school students



UB Mentor Spotlight Continued...

to pursue higher education and attend college is something I truly value. Education is valuable, and I believe everyone should have the opportunity to access it.”

In her free time, Let enjoys staying active through traditional don dance, tennis, running, and going to the gym. She also loves traveling and trying out new restaurants. “Overall, I try to stay active to keep healthy and fit. I also enjoy going to the movies with family, friends, and loved ones.”

Let’s advise current UB students is: “Work hard and be consistent. Hard work pays off, and in the end, things will work out if you put in the effort. Failing doesn’t always mean it’s the end—sometimes you have to fail to learn. That’s definitely something I learned along the way. Lastly, don’t be afraid to speak up. Seize every opportunity that comes your way.”

A fun fact about Let: She’s been scuba diving and sky diving, and once traveled to two different countries in a single summer!

We want to thank Let Let for taking the time to share her story and being a UB mentor!

Scholarship Opportunities for Bridge Students!

<i>Scholarship Name/Amount</i>	<i>Requirements</i>	<i>Website</i>	<i>Deadline</i>
2026 - 2027 Page Grant Ranges from \$2,500-\$3,500 per student annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * High school senior planning to enroll in college in Fall 2026 * Identify as a student of color * Demonstrate financial need * Enroll full-time at a Minnesota college or university * Be a Minnesota resident * Commit to completing 50 hours of volunteer service tutoring or mentoring K-8 students through the Service to Children program 	https://www.page-ed.org/apply/new-applicants/	Wednesday, April 1, 2026, at 11:59 p.m. CT
Construction Pathways Scholarship Up to \$30,000-\$35,000 per student over two years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Graduating high school senior (Class of 2026) from a Minnesota partner high school * Plan to enroll full-time at Dunwoody College of Technology in Fall 2026 * Pursuing a degree in Construction Project Management * Minimum 2.0 unweighted GPA * Demonstrate financial need * Priority given to Pell-eligible students and those with significant financial need * Interested in working at Mortenson or Ryan Companies and legally authorized to work in the United States 	https://www.wallinpartners.org/construction.html	Wednesday, April 1, 2026
2026 Kao Kalia Yang Scholarship Program \$5,000 per year and renewable for up to four years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Blood descendants of Hmong race or ethnically identified as Hmong American (with citizenship or as a permanent resident) * High school seniors who reside in the United States * Planning to enroll as a first-year student at a U.S.-accredited 4-year college/university or community college in Fall 2026 (college acceptance required if selected). * Minimum unweighted GPA of 2.8. * Household income must meet federal/state/county low-income guidelines (2024 or 2025 tax return required if selected). * Open to all majors. 	https://www.apcf.org/kao-kalia-yang-scholarship-open	Monday, April 20, 2026, by 11:59pm PDT
Wallin Two-Year Scholarship Up \$4,000 per year and renewable for up to two years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Graduating high school senior from a Minnesota partner high school * Plan to enroll full-time at an approved 2-year college or technical program in Fall 2026 * Minimum 2.5 unweighted GPA * Demonstrate financial need * Pell-eligible students prioritized * Demonstrate motivation, responsibility, and commitment to completing a degree 	https://www.wallinpartners.org/2-year-program.html	Friday, April 24, 2026

TRIO PROGRAMS/UPWARD BOUND
ST. OLAF COLLEGE
1520 ST. OLAF AVENUE
NORTHFIELD, MN 55057-1098

(507) 786-3708 FAX: (507) 786-3552
(800) 827-8658
WP.STOLAF.EDU/UPWARD
WP.STOLAF.EDU/TRIO
WWW.MNTRIO.SQUARESPACE.COM

St. Olaf College TRIO Upward Bound is an Educational Opportunity Program sponsored by St. Olaf College and funded by the United States Department of Education. St. Olaf College TRIO Upward Bound is an equal opportunity employer and educator.

St. Olaf TRIO Upward Bound participates in the Summer Food Service Program. In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Stop 9410, Washington, DC 20250-9410, or call toll-free at (866) 632-9992 (English) or (800) 887-8339 (TDD) or (866) 377-8642 (English Federal-relay) or (800) 845-6136 (Spanish Federal-relay) USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

TRIO UPWARD BOUND
St. Olaf College
TRIO Upward
Bound Messenger *est. 1989*



Program Staff
Mari Avaloz, Director
Nou Yang, Associate Director
Zookong Lee, Assistant Director
Tendor Norbu, Senior Academic Advisor
Tzolquin Pinedo, Senior Academic Advisor
Aye Bra Tha, Senior Academic Advisor
Newsletter Staff
Zookong Lee, Layout and Design

The St. Olaf College TRIO Upward Bound Messenger is published quarterly: Fall(October), Winter(December), Spring(March), and Summer(June). Editors reserve the right to add, change, or delete articles for spacing and clarity. All inquiries should be addressed to Mari Avaloz, Director of the St. Olaf Upward Bound, St. Olaf College, 1520 St. Olaf Avenue, Northfield, MN 55057-1098.