

## 2017 Dream Award Recipients

### 2017 Organization Dream Award - Muslim Student Association

"The Muslim Student Association's purpose and mission is to create a community within the non-Muslim and Muslim students on the university of Washington Tacoma campus and the greater Tacoma community. Their mission is to share awareness of Islam and breakdown the stereotypes that surround us. They want to inform and educate UWT's diverse student body and community members about the religion of Islam as well focusing on- on going issues that surround them both locally and globally."

After a group of Muslim Student Association (M.S.A.) officers attended the MSA West Conference last January in California, they came back energetic and motivated to make their organization successful on our campus. This was a tipping point in the success of the organization, and they have had a number of strong programs since then.

Since returning from the conference, the students involved in the organization began hosting Jummah prayers and tafsir classes on campus. Jummah is a congregational prayer held in the early afternoon, and tafsir is teachings and interpretations from the Quaran and life of the prophet. Led by a faculty member, they regularly have an average of 15 attendees at these events.

In February for National Hijab Day, MSA hosted an event on campus with students representing different countries and cultures, discussing and educating attendees on the meaning and importance of why Muslim women wear the Hijab. They hosted other educational programs during Islam Awareness Week. One successful event from that time was a "walk through" event in Commerce Plaza, where students passed out information and spoke with peers, testing their knowledge of Islam through some quiz questions and fun prizes.

During Ramadan this summer, they hosted an extremely successful Iftar, which is the dinner eaten after sunset during Ramadan to break one's fast. This was an extremely well attended event, drawing students, administrators and community members. The students presented a video composed of student and staff interviews, asking them to share what they knew about Ramadan. They shared personal Ramadan experiences from various times in their lives, and invited everyone to join them in eating delicious, traditional foods. They ended the final days of Ramadan with student profiles on their Facebook page, where they shared short interviews with a variety of students, both Muslim and non-Muslim. It was a great way to learn more about the experiences of

Muslim students on our campus and for non-Muslims to reflect on the importance that Ramadan carries for others.

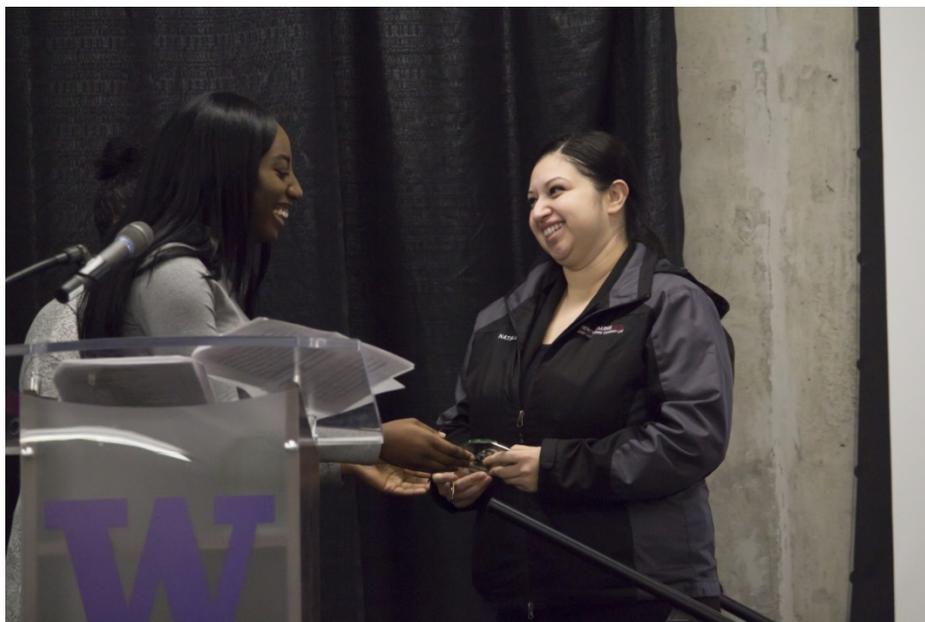
Students that are involved with MSA see it as a safe place to discuss their faith, as well as other societal issues happening at this time. This quarter, the organization has helped organize a moment of silence following the Presidential election, and made it known that their organization meetings are a space where members can discuss ways in which to move the community forward in positive ways.

A major milestone for MSA this quarter was the establishment of a meditation room on campus. Student leaders from MSA worked with Chancellor Pagano to bring this initiative to life. This space is widely used by person of all faith and non-faith backgrounds. Continuing on this work, MSA has regular meetings with the Chancellor to discuss ways in which to support students of all religious backgrounds at UW Tacoma.

MSA's work is coming full circle, as they now embark on a substantial undertaking to bring a session of the same MSA West conference that inspired them, here to our campus. They have already begun researching potential speakers, presenters and workshops that could be invited to campus for this immersive session.

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## 2017 Student Dream Award - Nataley Guajardo



Nataley Guajardo is a first-Generation, transfer student from Pierce College – Fort Steilacoom. Prior to her attendance here at UW Tacoma, Nataley had already established her commitment to social justice and diversity as the student-body president of Pierce College. Here at UWT, she is a senior; majoring in Law & Policy and minoring in Hispanic Studies. On campus, she serves as the First Generation Leadership Development Coordinator under Student Support Programs and the President of Latinxs Embracing Education Registered Student Organization. Nataley is also sits on the First Generation College Student Committee and the campus' Commencement Committee. Nataley stresses the importance of believing in one's self and encourages her peers to step out of their comfort zones.

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## 2017 Student Dream Award - Kent Thomas



Kent Thomas is a Master of Social Work student at UWT. He was born and raised in Tacoma and has always loved this city. After high school, he moved to Bellingham where he studied Psychology (and had the worst 4 years of his life).

The day he graduated, he moved back to Tacoma and has never regretted it. His love for this city and the people here, make it a great place to live, work, and play. Kent was a part of the team that organized canvassing events against I-1515 (Washington's anti-transgender initiative) last summer. It was only the beginning of the fight to ensure equal rights for transgender people, locally and nationally. In addition to transgender equality, there is much more work to be done in Tacoma, and the citizens of this city have shown

that we are able and ready to organize and work hard. Kent says he is honored to play whatever roll he can in the continuing process. He has loved learning from the awesome people at UW Tacoma, WA SAFE Alliance, and the Rainbow Center. He and his husband got married last August and plan to live in Tacoma forever!

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## 2017 Student Dream Award - Alberto Baena



Alberto Baena is a Tacoma local, he graduated from Lincoln High School in 2011, received his Associates Degree from Tacoma Community College and is now a senior at UW Tacoma. Alberto has been an active volunteer both at UW Tacoma and the surrounding community. For the past three years he has been volunteering with multiple local schools as a Youth Development Specialist for the nonprofit organization (Proyecto MoLE) from the Northwest Leadership Organization. The disadvantages of the Latino Community and lower class citizens, were vital factors in his decision to pursue a degree in Criminal Justice and he would like to continue working with youth in the future..

Alberto has also helped organize an annual Latino/Latina Youth Summit in Tacoma. This summit brings youth from Pierce County together and provides workshops on college preparation, masculinity, undocumented status and dreamers, and other issues of importance in his communities.

Finally, Alberto currently works for the Office of Equity and Inclusion as a Student Lead in the Student Success Mentoring Program (SSMP). Through this work, he connects faculty mentors with students at UW Tacoma who are looking for academic, personal, and professional mentorship.