

# TRIO/SSS TRIBUNE

## AUSGBURG TRIO/SSS SAYS FAREWELL TO MELODY MARTAGON-GEIGER

*Editor's note: we chose to publish a "special edition" of the TRIO newsletter to honor Melody Martagon-Geiger's decade of service to Augsburg University and TRIO/SSS students, staff and faculty. The newsletter format allows us to record all of the wonderful things we want to say to her as we wish her well. But it's also our chance for one last round at an inside joke\* that TRIO staff share with Melody. Tee hee, we love you Melody!*



### The Good news:

**We Got her for A Whole Decade!** We got to work with, learn from, and yes some of us got to play with her for 10 years at Augsburg! In that time:

- Melody advised over 200 students through their entire Augsburg career. Over half of them have graduated or will graduate in the near future.
  - Melody taught about 200 students in nine sections of GST 100: Critical Thinking course.
  - She wrote approximately 5,000 Letters of Recommendation on behalf of students applying to scholarships, internships, and jobs.
  - She made countless phone calls and emails, and showed up in many doorways of Augsburg faculty and staff, to advocate for students or just to better understand the context of the student experience.
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- She also acted as “staff representative” for a few students appearing at conduct hearings (maybe that’s bad news? Really, I don’t think she’ll miss this part of her job as much).
  - She ate approximately 12,000\*\* bag lunches from her lap or crowded around a study table, with colleagues in the Gage Center.
  - She brought us Internship-palooza and connected dozens of students to meaningful internship work experiences through partnerships she developed with community internship programs.

### The Bad News:

**Melody lives in a land far, far away from Augsburg:** It’s a magical place called Farmington. According to google maps, this commute will “typically take between 35 minutes and 1 hour and 10 minutes” each way. However:

- According to the many texts Melody sent from the road (using her hands-free device, of course!), Minnesota weather and traffic accidents can blow up all the google map statistics. Sometimes she just sent a picture of the MnDOT sign: “30 minutes to Hwy 62”.
- On a couple occasions where she sat in traffic for hours, she let her common sense prevail and went home to email students that she would never make it to campus in time to meet, could they have a google chat instead?
- It was a long enough bus ride to campus after spending Friday Funday at Melody’s house, that Summer Bridge students always, aaaalwaaays fell asleep.

The other bad news is, of course, Melody is leaving Augsburg. She will develop her career as Assistant Director of Advising at St Olaf College. But that is great news for both Melody and the students, staff and faculty at Olaf!

Well the good and the bad of it is, we will miss you, Melody! You are a gifted advisor and teacher, always quick with a smile and kind words. You are a creative problem solver and initiated some of the best programming at Augsburg TRIO/SSS. You taught us how to take effective lecture notes, how to read texts purposefully, and how to manage our time and ourselves. You lead by your words and deeds and so we say: may your goals always be S.M.A.R.T.!

\*go ahead, take Melody out sometime and ask her about it!

-Aly O

\*\* these statistics may or may not be accurate.

# MESSAGES TO MELODY



I enjoyed the many lunches with you. You have such a passion for our students to succeed. I wish you all the best in your next season!

- Kathy McGillivray

I wish you all the best Melody! Thank you for welcoming me in my first few weeks at Augsburg. I can already see why you will be so greatly missed! I hope our paths cross again in the future.

-Cassie Charles

Melody, I wish you all the best as you begin your new endeavor at St. Olaf. I have enjoyed working with you and look forward to staying in contact. Congratulations!

-Catherina Kipper

Melody, I often reflect on our consultations and comparing notes in our teaching efforts with Critical Thinking. You're a committed educator and your work with students is transformative. I hope you love the new calling and have at least as much influence on teaching and learning at St. Olaf as you did at Augsburg. Time for an woolen ugly sweater?

-Rick Gubash (Former Critical Thinker)



Melody, though we only worked together a short time, it was so clear your passion for your students and Augsburg University. I'm so happy to know we will remain colleagues in the field! May our paths cross again! All the best to you on this exciting new adventure!

-Lauren Schroeder



Melody has showed me what it meant to be an advisor to students. She was always calm, direct, but nurturing in all my interactions I witnessed her have with students. These qualities I have taken with me when working with my own students at Augsburg, and now at St. Thomas. As a colleague, Melody's smile and laugh were infectious not just during the lunch bunch time but in any and all times of collaboration with her. She is a gem of a colleague and modeled what it meant to be a peer, colleague and friend, no matter how tough the work got! She left a huge impact on me during our time working together and miss here everyday!

-Rachel Kruzel



Hi Melody. I'm sorry that Augsburg is losing you but so happy for your new opportunity. St Olaf will be very lucky to have you! I always appreciated your calmness and your wonderful expertise. I knew when one of my students was working with you that they would be in very good hands. You were always so great to all students but particularly with students with disabilities in the office or the classroom. I miss you since I left and miss our chats walking in from the parking garage in the morning. You know I had a trying year and you were always willing to listen and be a friend. My most sincere wishes for a continued outstanding career. I will see you soon!

-Sheila Fox Wassink



Thank you for being an amazing colleague and I'm sure we'll still run into each other from time to time! Sending lots of love and positive vibes your way. Congrats!

-Pa Dao Yang

Melody, you have been such a valued colleague here at Augsburg! Thank you so much for collaborating - with students and with lunchtime. :) St. Olaf is getting a good one, those lucky ducks on the hill. Best wishes.

-Katie Lane

Melody, many thanks for all your hard work with TRIO and the summer school classes. I can't believe you had to listen to that many talks on Martin Luther! You know far more than most Lutherans I have met! I also have some good memories from our Augsburg trip to Germany. You were fun, eager to learn, and adapted quite well, I recall, to German food and beer! The very best to you at St. Olaf. I hope the transition goes well and I hope the Oles know what a fine colleague and mentor they are getting.

-Tranvik



Thank you, Melody, for all of the support you have given our students at Augsburg over the years. It has been a pleasure working with you, and you will be greatly missed. All the best wishes to you in your new position at St. Olaf!

-Sincerely, Jeanette Wittmer

Melody, it has been such a pleasure working with you over the years! You will be greatly missed here, but I'm excited about this new opportunity for you and wish you all the best at St. Olaf!

-Catherine Maun

Melody has been committed to TRIO SSS students and Augsburg students as an academic advisor and an instructor. She has applied her talents and wisdom regarding study skill development and taught critical thinking skills as part of her commitment to help students reach their academic goals.

-Maria Cristina Tavera

## LETTER FROM KEVIN CHEATHAM

About 20 years ago, I met someone with whom I would later work at Augsburg. That person was Aly Olson, then Jepsen, and she was then working at a TRIO program at the University of Minnesota. A few years after that chance meeting, I would meet another person with whom I would later work with: Melody Martagon-Geiger. Melody had just started working at the Dakota County Technical College TRIO/Upward Bound program as an advisor. At the time, I was employed with the St. Olaf College TRIO/Upward Bound program and Melody visited our program to see how our Upward Bound program operated. This particular day we were meeting with students at St. Paul Humboldt High School which I later learned was Melody's alma mater.

Fast forward in time. I was now working at Augsburg University, then College, and our Student Support Services program was looking for a new advisor. One night, while at home, I received a phone call—it was Melody. Melody was in the advisor candidate pool and she had questions about how our program worked. Melody and I chatted for some time and one thing I remember saying to Melody was that, "You'll do great at Augsburg and you'll like it here."

A few months after that phone call was Melody's first day of work. It was a baptism by fire as Melody's introduction to Augsburg coincided with the start of our Summer Bridge program. This time, Melody did not get a chance to ask more questions about how things worked. Instead it was, "Here's your binder, Melody, good luck. Oh, and welcome!"

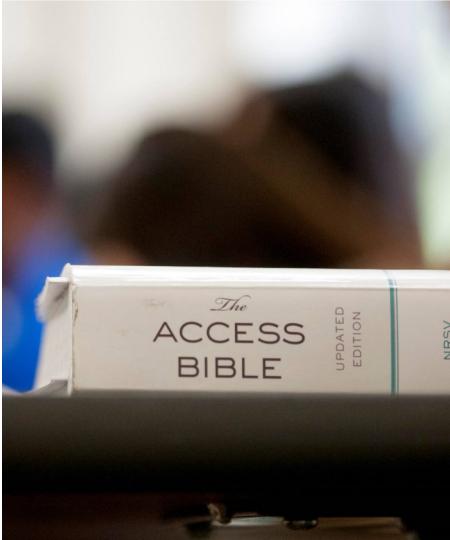
Perhaps it was good that Melody did not get the opportunity to ask a lot more questions then, as it allowed Melody to really shape what her role would be as the new advisor and supplemental instructor, hence, not many pre-conceived notions. And boy, did she re-define the office and her role. Caring, patient, no-nonsense, diligent, hard-working, role model, knowledge seeking, mother(ly)—the list could go on and on about what Melody brought to TRIO/SSS and to Augsburg. Some might say that Melody is the "heart" of our program, and some things cease to exist without one.

Of course, we will go on without Melody (insert lame Titanic reference here). But Melody's impact on our program and students is immeasurable. Our loss is certainly St. Olaf's gain. Thank you, Melody, for all that you've done for TRIO. TRIO for LIFE! You'll do great at St. Olaf and you'll like it there.

-Kevin



# WORDS THAT DESCRIBE MELODY



-Caring



-Genuine

**-Nurturing**



-Generous

**-Enthusiastic**

-Patient

-No Nonsense

**-Friend**

*-Positive*

-Encouraging



**-Fun**

-Teacher

**-Kind**

**-Loving**

**-Team Player**

## MELODY'S IMPACT ON STUDENTS



Melody and I always had fun conversations while I worked in the office. I'm really going to miss that! Best wishes Melody!

-Emily Saldivar



I am a first generation student, so my parents couldn't always tell me what was best for me as far as classes to take and what exactly I should be doing. Melody was always there to tell me what I should do and to help me out with staying on track. I am extremely blessed to have had someone like her cheering me on, and telling me the hard truth whenever it was necessary. I'm sad that I won't be able to celebrate her last day at Augsburg.

-Davida Fuller

Working with Melody was like having a 2nd Mom to me. She was there when I need to vent about classes and life. She shared personal experiences with me and it helped me see I wasn't alone. She encouraged me to take a huge step in my life and for that I will always be thankful. She left a mark in my life! Her push to a better life helped me realize what I really needed. Not only did she motivate me in my academics, she helped me see asking for help was not a weakness. I will never forget her kindness and caring nature towards me. She was the best Trio advisor I could've asked for. Melody, you will be missed and just know you're always in my thoughts when I need that extra push throughout the day. Wish you the best on your new journey! To Melody's new students: You're in great hands!

-Marisol Lopez

Hey Melo! Congrats on your level up!! You'll do great in your new position! I wish you the best of luck! I appreciate you for making me sign up for that El Salvador trip. You sparked my travel bug and that's an experience I'll never forget! I'm sure you will put a flame under other students' butts and help them do great things too. May you stay cool, calm, and collected in your new position. You're about to kill it! Woo!

-Zaurean Nickens

Melody. You saw me as a little ugly Summer Bridge duckling and it's so sad that you are leaving before you see me turn into a slightly less ugly TRIO/SSS graduate. I am so grateful for all your guidance and for always listening to me rant about various things such as trippin' females, my Korean idols, and just life in general. Coming into the office won't be the same anymore without you trying to make me become a more productive human being and it won't be the same anymore when someone else makes their microwavable bacon. Anyways, I wish you well for what's to come along your journey and I hope that you'll continue doing great things :)

-Thomas Moua

Melody has always encouraged me to not give up hope, even when I'm feeling discouraged and insecure. She's helped me persevere through the complicated process of college, and I can't thank her more for that! Thank you for everything you've done, Melody! You've made such an impact on my college journey and I'll always be thankful for your help and support! Good luck at St. Olaf, you're gonna do great!

-Shevon Greene



Melody always looked out for what was best for her students. She always had different opportunities to offer students as well as great advice. She's an amazing TRIO advisor and will continue to do amazing things and be loved as a mentor where ever she goes. YOU'RE AWESOME MELODY! Hopefully you come and visit! Best wishes to you. :)

-Nancy Lor

I can honestly say that I've never met a person like you. Thank you so much for just being there, literally one email away-- I hope the best for you and your next journey!

-Saberina S. Calle



Melody had taught me a valuable lesson on Independence and educational purpose through advice on working hard towards class or course goals and work in engaging with in-classes and human experiences to better myself as a student . Also give thanks to Melody and others who have supported me along the way.

-Mh'Rissa Rowe



Melody is an advisor that I was able to talk to and connect with. Someone who I could look up to when I ran into problems. She created a welcoming environment for all our meetings and our encounters were enjoyable.

-Anna Vang

# THANK YOU, MELODY!



Melody, you have taught me so much about myself professionally and personally over the past five years. Being the newest Advisor to the Augsburg TRIO/SSS team, you have taken me under your wings and mentored me through Summer Bridge and the cyclical nature of TRIO/SSS. I appreciate your patience, your kindness, and the way you are so direct, but in a gentle way. Thank you for sharing your parenting tips with me and for always asking how I am doing. I enjoyed our lunches together in the front office as well as with the ladies in the CLASS office. You always bring a smile on your face even when things weren't always easy and that was infectious to everyone around you. Your kindness and positive attitude will be missed and it will be very hard to replace you. I will miss our workshop planning sessions and laughing about "sexy" workshop names to get our students to attend. Although there is a lot of sadness for me, I am also very excited for your new adventure at St. Olaf. I know you will be great and the students, faculty and staff at St. Olaf are very lucky to

gain an amazing colleague. Best wishes to you as you embark on this new journey. Thank you for being such a wonderful friend and colleague and for making work fun and enjoyable! You will be missed.

-Xia Xiong-Vang

## Contact Us

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Melody, it has been such a pleasure to get to know you this year. I value your wisdom and perspective especially when I've needed advice and someone to take another look. I especially appreciate our mutual love of dogs, and sharing pictures with each other of our little Chihuahua mixes. Ginger is so going to be so excited by your shorter commute. Thank you for all your hard work and dedication to the students. Even though we've known each other a short time, I can see your impact on campus and in the TRIO program. Especially when I talk to the students and staff you work with. You will be missed. Best of luck on your new adventure!

- Annie

