

This letter is my account of being a current college member of The Office Group. I have now been a member of The Office Group for 4 years and I am finishing my junior year at Saint Mary's College of California.

I was introduced to The Office Group by my counselor during my junior year in high school. At the time, I was enrolled in a dual enrollment program, taking college courses at COCC and receiving credit for them in high school. My counselor saw my drive and motivation to pursue an education and suggested I apply to The Office Group. Joining The Office Group was truly a blessing and one I am incredibly grateful for.

Being a Mexican American and coming from a lower middle-class family, I didn't have big aspirations when it came to college. I knew that I wanted to get a degree in computer science but that was about it. My original plan before joining TOG was to attend COCC for two years and then transfer. I was never really happy with this idea, but it was what I had to do due to my financial situation.

Once I joined TOG I had access to an abundance of resources. And because of this, I was able to change my idea of college. With the help of Teresa, a college counselor from The Office Group, I found schools that would be possible for me to attend. With her help and The Office Group's help, I found Saint Mary's College of California—a school that I never thought I would have been able to attend, but now will be graduating from in 2024. The Office Group allowed me to pursue my dreams of having a college experience outside of Central Oregon.

Not only did TOG help with my process of finding a school to attend but they helped with every detail such as Financial Aid and scholarships. They also have been there to help guide me through my college years, supporting me with tutors and any resources I needed. For example, during my second semester of freshman year at SMC, all my courses were online due to covid. I was struggling with my Calculus II course as well as Chemistry 2. The Office Group helped me find tutors for these courses and because of that, I was able to pass my courses. Although I probably could have used my school for tutors it was a lot easier to go through TOG and find local tutors who I could meet with in person.

During this time TOG was a space I could go to for studying and to attend my online classes. It gave me some sort of structure that was not there because of covid, and this helped me succeed a lot. It was hard to do my work at home because it wasn't a scholarly environment and having two loud younger siblings didn't help.