



Musa Abdi

TRIO SSS

Musa Abdi was born in Ethiopia but grew up in the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya following his father's death. Life was difficult in the camp which has been described as "equal parts prison and exile." Musa was aware of the daily toll that lack of medical care wrought – death during childbirth, improper use of medications, and death from treatable diseases such as malaria, and he decided he would become a doctor.

When Musa and his family immigrated to the United States in 2013, their lives improved in terms of physical amenities and access to healthcare. However, they struggled financially and emotionally. Musa's mother became disheartened. She was a single parent in a foreign culture where she could not communicate or get a job. In a short time, she and her family were evicted because they could not afford the rent.

As a high school junior, Musa shouldered some of the worry. However, rather than discouraging him, these hardships motivated him to work harder and to reach farther in his education. In Fall 2014, even though he was not yet eligible for in-state tuition, Musa enrolled at South Seattle College (SSC). He had been awarded SSC's 13th Year Scholarship which, along with financial aid, helped pay tuition. At orientation, Musa affiliated with TRiO and was soon hired as a peer tutor.

Musa is one of TRiO's most popular peer tutors. He is the first to help students who appear for drop-in tutoring and for advice. Musa also seizes every opportunity to enhance his own education—participating in the 2015 Summer Medical and Dental Education Program (SMDEP) at University of Washington, Phi Theta Kappa, and SSC's Ready, Set Transfer Program for STEM majors. He also volunteers regularly at St. Mary's Food Bank, tutors low-income youth at a local housing complex, and regularly engages in SSC community service events. In Fall 2015, Musa's academic achievement was recognized when he was selected for the All-Washington Academic Team.

Although initially drawn to a career in medicine, as a result of SMDEP, Musa plans to become a pharmacist. Through this career, he will be able to relieve suffering and educate patients. He will be able to provide for his family. He will mentor and encourage immigrants, refugees, first generation college students, and anyone who wants to contribute to society through a healthcare career. Musa's response to adversity has been to strive to improve his own life as well as the lives of those who surround him.

Education has been his lifeline. Musa notes, "I loved school so much from a young age. I was very dedicated to my studies. I never wasted my time; these habits became part of my life and to this date education is still my first priority."



Student Success Services

South Seattle College (SSC) established TRIO-SSS in 1990 and has provided college success and transition services for more than 4,000 participants – over 90% of whom are eligible for need-based financial aid and more than half are English language learners. The student population comes from the neighborhoods of South King County, which includes the industrialized parts of Seattle and close to SeaTac airport. SSC is one of three schools within the Seattle Colleges District.

TRIO-SSS provides a low advisor-to-student ratio, allowing the staff to get involved in their student's academic development from the time they enter South to the day they graduate. In addition to advising and tutoring services in math, English, and the sciences, TRIO-SSS also provide field trips to local universities, financial aid/scholarship workshops, and student conferences focusing on leadership and diversity.

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