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Cheyenne Martinez displayed her artistic talents at the UNM-Gallup Spring Student Art Show and walked away with a top ribbon for “Best in Show – Drawing.”

With the ribbon in hand as well as a recently earned Associate of Arts degree in Criminal Justice, Martinez is embarking on a new stage in her life as she heads to Trinity Washington University in Washington, D.C. to pursue a Bachelor’s degree in Criminal Justice.

Originally from Tsayatoh, N.M., Martinez is a 2014 graduate of Gallup High School who enrolled in UNM-Gallup right after commencement. After her first semester she decided to go a different direction and enlisted in active duty with the U.S. Army.

She returned to UNM-Gallup after a year and a half in South Carolina with a stronger appreciation for her education.

“After I got out of the Army, I was happy for the opportunities of understanding more things,” she said. “I was an introvert in high school, but opened up and did more on my own after I got back to Gallup. I realized the more I get involved, the more opportunities I will have.”

This involvement did not just apply to her education as Martinez is also very involved with veterans’ affairs issues at both the Tsayatoh Chapter and the Navajo Nation level.

Martinez is grateful for the credits she has already earned at UNM-Gallup almost all of which will transfer to Trinity Washington University. After becoming comfortable in the higher education environment, Martinez decided she wanted to broaden her educational frame of reference.

“I wanted to widen my radius so I applied to UNLV and Trinity Washington. I was accepted at both but felt like I needed to consider which school would get me where I want to go,” she said. “I picked Trinity for its location and opportunities to work with Homeland Security.”

Martinez completed her Associate’s degree in two years by attending UNM-Gallup full time. She is already taking online upper division classes from the UNM main campus in criminology to get a head start in accumulating credit hours.

She is very thankful for the support of her family and community.

“I have the support of my family, friends and the community as a whole,” she said. “I’m getting help from the Navajo Nation to attend school and I hope to pay that back by working as a Navajo Nation detective.”

Martinez’s advice to students considering college is to: “Start close before going far away. Learn to navigate and be aware of opportunities in life. You won’t have to work a day in your life if you pursue something you love.”

