

DIVERSITY SPOTLIGHT



1-866-OSA-FRAUD
www.saonm.org

State Auditor
Brian S. Colón, Esq.

EMBRACING EXCELLENCE THROUGH DIVERSITY + INCLUSION CELEBRATING WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

In recognition of Women's History Month, an annual declaration dedicated to highlighting the contributions of women to events in history and contemporary society, the Office of the State Auditor (OSA) welcomes you to join our celebration of women and the contributions they bring to the field of accountancy and auditing. In that spirit, while we have a team comprised of 53% dynamic and powerful women, we are honored to spotlight the professional story of one, our very own civil servant and OSA Senior Audit Managers, Liza Kerr.

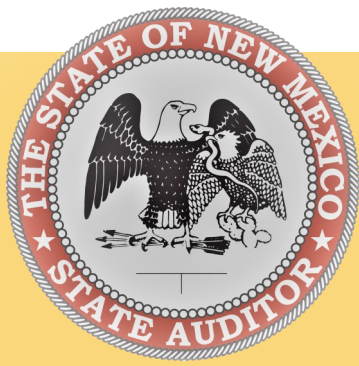
Nevertheless, she persisted. A profile in courage and determination.

Liza Kerr is a Financial Audit Manager for the New Mexico Office of the State Auditor. She has a Masters in Business Administration (MBA), and is currently a Certified Public Accountant, a Certified Information Systems Auditor, and a Certified Internal Auditor.

The path to success was not always easy for Liza; rather, it was filled with many twists and turns. She

started her studies at the University of New Mexico (UNM) in 1987 as a single parent, raising two small children. Liza was fortunate to find a space in UNM's Student Family Housing, which exposed her family to a multicultural experience that has left a long term impact on both herself and her girls. Life at this point was difficult. Finding the next meal was always a challenge, as was finding time to study with two small children.





DIVERSITY SPOTLIGHT



1-866-OSA-FRAUD

www.saonm.org

State Auditor
Brian S. Colón, Esq.

EMBRACING EXCELLENCE THROUGH DIVERSITY + INCLUSION

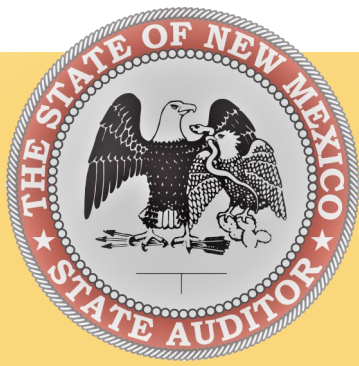
CELEBRATING WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

However, Liza's persistence paid off. She was able to pay tuition and rent expenses with financial aid, and later scholarships, and found a work study job in UNM's Internal Audit Department. Her experience in Internal Audit, and the nurturing she received from her mentors in the department left a lasting impression and led to a fulfilling and dynamic career in audit.

Liza's next goal was to gain employment at one of the large international accounting firms in Albuquerque. She set her sights on KPMG. However, many barriers stood in her way 1) her age – her expected graduation age would be 32, 2) her availability – how could she meet the demands of travel for work, with 2 small children, and 3) competition was fierce. Liza's goal of obtaining a bachelor's degree was two years away and approaching fast, so she set out to distinguish herself from the competition. Liza wanted to do something that no one else had been able to do. Her search for just such a project led to starting a Beta Alpha Psi Chapter at UNM. Beta Alpha Psi is an accounting society and UNM did not have one. Liza bounced her idea off of professors, various professionals and was told repeatedly it could not be done; many people had already tried and failed. She quickly concluded this would be the perfect project and began researching how to start a Chapter.

With the help of research librarians (Liza did not own a computer) she was able to obtain various scholarships and a roadmap to starting a Chapter. With scholarship money, Liza purchased her first computer (summer prior to junior year) and began sending letters to the managing partners at all of the Certified Public Accounting (CPA) firms in Albuquerque to raise the \$10,000 she needed to submit the application. A probationary period then began where she had to prove that the chapter was viable. This included finding members, doing extensive community projects, filling out lots and lots of paperwork, and meeting other pre-defined goals. She was able to do this – achieve the impossible. That helped Liza to land an interview and a job offer from KPMG. At 32 years old, Liza was the oldest staff auditor that the KPMG New Mexico office had ever hired. Crash went the glass ceiling! After Liza was hired and demonstrated her skills and abilities, KPMG made it a common practice to interview and hire nontraditional students.

The overarching lesson learned, was that everyone has choices. We are defined not by the mistakes we make, but by our ability to hit rock bottom, shake ourselves off, and get up and try again. Single minded persistence, and knowing you can do the impossible, knowing that when you approach everyday with the philosophy of doing the next right thing, no matter how hard it is, doors will open. When you are willing to ask for help, people give it freely. Once you achieve your professional goals, it becomes your turn to reach back and pull the next person up. When someone asks for help, you give it, freely. Most of all believe in yourself and nothing becomes impossible.



DIVERSITY
SPOTLIGHT



1-866-OSA-FRAUD

www.saonm.org

State Auditor
Brian S. Colón, Esq.

EMBRACING EXCELLENCE THROUGH DIVERSITY + INCLUSION

CELEBRATING WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

A Message from State Auditor Brian S. Colón, Esq.

The OSA is committed to leading inclusively and as an organization gender diversity at the OSA is thriving. Currently, women comprise the majority workforce of OSA at 53%, with five women serving in leadership roles, including Natalie Cordova, CPA as Deputy State Auditor, CFO, and acting Special Investigations Director; Lynette Kennard, CPA, CGFM as Financial Audit Director, Lori Johnson as Human Resource Manager, Laura Montoya as Budget and Finance Director, and Stephanie W. Telles, MBA, CFE as Government Accountability Office Director.

The OSA understands firsthand the advantages of women in leadership positions. The value our women leaders bring to the OSA each day stretches beyond accountability and the critical audit work performed it's also demonstrative in the way they foster an environment of collaboration, inspiration, and innovation; elements that are central to the important work of the OSA. For that, and so much more, I am grateful to serve alongside them.

With respect and gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "B. S. Colón".

Brian S. Colón, Esq.
New Mexico State Auditor

