



CALIFORNIA COLLEGE PATHWAYS

www.cacollegepathways.org



**California College Pathways
is dedicated to increasing
the number of former foster
youth in California who enter
higher education and achieve
an academic outcome.**

Celebrating Stories of Success SUMMER 2009 Newsletter

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Former foster youth face insurmountable obstacles in their journey through the foster care system. Despite these difficulties, many students from foster care manage to enter college and graduate. The *California College Pathways Summer 2009 Newsletter* is dedicated to the many hardworking young adults who have defied grim statistics and unimaginable hardships to pursue a dream of a college education. We want to thank our many graduates for sharing their achievements and to congratulate all students from foster care who have graduated in the class of 2009. From oral reflections by these graduates, we learn that persistence and dedication are key factors to their internal push to get through the difficulties they face in attaining a college degree. Through their candid testimonials, we learned that participation in campus support programs was a factor in their personal and academic success. We hope that this edition of the newsletter will help highlight the achievements of these resilient young adults, and encourage those who are about to turn toward this path.

Celebrating Stories of SUCCESS



Homib Abraha

San José State, BS Social Work



Originally from Eritrea, Homib completed her bachelor's degree in social work from San José State. Homib's dedication to the Connect, Motivate, Educate (CME) Society went beyond her participation in the program.

Homib served as a student assistant in the program for the past two years. She was also a counselor at the Early Academic Planning camp, giving back to foster children each summer. In addition, she has been a strong advocate and has served in many outreach activities. She says, "CME is a community of friends and supporters that has helped me find my way on campus."



Shaun Amundson

San José State,
BA Communication Studies



Shaun graduated with a bachelor's degree in communication studies and a minor in business administration. Shaun is an incredible multitasking young man: a single parent, banker, entertainer, and student.

He was a YES Scholar for the Silicon Valley Children's Fund and an active CME Society member. Shaun has participated in several outreach activities during his time at the university.



Ashley Barnett

UC Santa Cruz, BA English Literature



With her English literature degree in hand, Ashley dreams of one day becoming a writer for children's books and to ultimately work at a museum.



James Barton

UC Santa Cruz,
BA Sociology and Philosophy



James graduated with a bachelor's degree in sociology and philosophy. He is forging ahead with plans to work in the field of dependency law after law school. He is passionate to help others and hopes to make a positive change in the world through social activism. His advice is, "Never quit! The

hardest part is getting past that nagging voice in your head that says you can't do it! Success quiets that voice."



Adam Bateham

CSU Fullerton, BA Psychology



Adam's dream is to earn a doctorate degree in clinical psychology with an emphasis in legal psychology. He graduated cum laude with a bachelor's degree in psychology with a minor in sociology. A member of Psi Chi, the National Honor Society in Psychology, and the Golden Key Honor Society, he was also a peer mentor and outreach coordinator at Orangewood Children's Foundation. Adam has been accepted into the graduate program in psychology at Cal State Fullerton and will begin his graduate studies this fall.



Daniel Brennan

UC Santa Cruz,
BA Community Students, Economic
Justice, and Indigenous Rights



As a Smith Renaissance program participant, Daniel now holds a bachelor's degree in community studies, economic justice, and indigenous rights. He hopes to continue his education by attending law school and work in the field of human rights law. His advice for foster youth is, "Be persistent, accept help, and it will be worth it in the end."



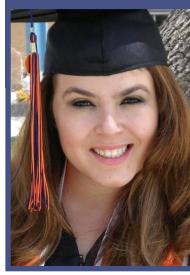
Ashley Butler

CSU East Bay, BA Sociology



Ashley loved basketball and imagined playing competitively on a team in college. However, her world was turned upside down at age 11 when she was placed into foster care. In her senior year of high school, she received a 4.0 GPA and a new desire to attend college.

After attending City College of San Francisco, she transferred to CSU East Bay. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in sociology and would like to become a social worker in San Francisco. She is grateful for the friendships she developed as a member of the Renaissance Scholars program.



Michelle Cadwell

CSU Fullerton, BA History



Michelle earned a bachelor's degree in history and will pursue a master's degree in education. Her long-term goal is to obtain a doctorate. For now, she plans to become a

history teacher and work with inner-city youth. Michelle has served as a docent at the Fullerton Arboretum and volunteered to support the child abuse prevention month campaign. Michelle is proud to have reached her goal of earning an undergraduate degree in four years.



Zulhay Castillo

UC Santa Cruz, BA Art



Zulhay graduated with a bachelor's degree in art and hopes to find an internship in photography. She aspires to attend graduate school to get her Master of Fine Arts degree and establish a career as a photographer covering social issues throughout the world.

Zulhay says, "Without education, you may never learn about yourself and what you want."



Amanda Cherny-Reyes

San José State, BS Nursing



Amanda graduated with a bachelor's degree in nursing with an emphasis in critical care. She participated early on in CME Society as a panelist for high school orientation for foster youth. She has been a YES Scholar and Foster a Dream Scholarship recipient. She has two children and will be the first in her family to graduate with a degree.



Jacqueline Diep

San José State,
BS Business Administration



Jacqueline received her bachelor's degree in business administration with an emphasis in advertising. She has been a YES Scholar and participated in Connect, Motive, Educate Society activities.



Kevin Givan

San José State,
BA Political Science and Sociology



Kevin Givan earned dual bachelor's degrees in political science and sociology. He has been a counselor at Early Academic Planning camp and a campus leader in the volunteer effort to help Hurricane Katrina victims (Louisiana Winter project), and has served on the CME Society steering team. He was a consistent volunteer speaker at many outreach events to foster youth including The Luncheon for Higher Education Opportunities, High School Orientation, and Creating a Blueprint

Conference. Kevin was recognized for his many contributions and received a Honoring Emancipated Youth Leadership award in 2009.



Tarae Graves

CSU Fullerton,
BS Human Services and Criminal Justice



Tarae graduated cum laude and is the only Cal State Fullerton Guardian Scholar in the Class of 2009 with dual degrees. Growing up in the foster care system, Tarae knows firsthand that a social worker can make all the difference in the world to a child. Tarae's passion for issues surrounding foster care and juveniles has led her to chart a future course toward child advocacy. She has worked at the CSUF Children's Center, the CSUF University Police Department, and the United Friends of the Children in Los Angeles as well as with young girls on probation at Florence Crittenton. She also participated on the track team and was a recipient of the Wilma Rudolf Award. Tarae has been accepted into the master's program in social work at Cal State Fullerton and plans to become a social worker. She hopes to one day motivate foster youth to use the foster care system as a stepping stone to their success.



Sean Guthrie

CSU Fullerton, BA Psychology



Sean earned a bachelor's degree in psychology. He plans to obtain a master's degree in social work, with the ultimate goal of becoming a university professor. He has served as a member of the Guardian Scholars Student Advisory Committee and made numerous presentations on behalf of the program throughout the country. Sean was a peer mentor for the Orangewood Children's Foundation and currently serves as the Orange County chapter chair for California Youth Connection, a foster youth advocacy organization led by current and former foster youth. Sean is working for the Community Services Program, a nonprofit agency serving Orange County youth who are involved, or are at risk of involvement, with the juvenile justice system.



Quanice Hawkins

UC Berkeley, BA Sociology



Quanice graduated from UC Berkeley with a bachelor's degree in sociology and has a goal of obtaining a graduate degree in public administration. Quanice currently works as an intern for Casey Family Programs as a youth advocate for current and former foster youth. She helps youth who are near emancipation to make goals and life plans. She has been involved with the Breakthrough Series

Collaborative in which she trains county teams on transforming their Independent Living Programs throughout California. As a dedicated member of California Youth Connection, she has advocated for change in policy and practices of the foster care system.



Iris Hernandez

CSU Stanislaus, BA Sociology



Iris found a way to escape from the chaos of her home life through school, where she excelled. She left an abusive home at age 13 and was placed into foster care. By age 14, Iris dropped out of middle school and was a chronic runaway. By the time she was 23, she

was a single parent of two children and attending Valley College in Los Angeles. Despite all of the challenges Iris faced in her life, she never gave up and managed to transfer to CSU Stanislaus where she earned a bachelor's degree in sociology. Iris believes she would not have made it if it had not been for the support and mentoring she received through the Promise Scholars Program. Iris has been accepted into the graduate program at CSUS in public administration and will continue her studies this fall. As a former foster youth and single parent, Iris wants others in similar situations to know, "It may seem hard, yet nothing is impossible. You can accomplish whatever you set your mind on doing."



Michelle Herrick

UC Santa Cruz, BS Chemistry



Graduating with a bachelor's degree in chemistry is not enough for Michelle. She plans to work as a laboratory technician at UC Santa Cruz in the Biochemistry Research Lab and pursue her dream of attaining a doctorate degree in organic chemistry.

Her advice to foster youth is, "Never give up when times get rough because there are opportunities waiting around the corner. If you can make it through life being in foster care, you can make it through anything."



Militza Jimenez

CSU San Marcos, BA Psychology



"The key to academic success is getting involved and participating in your own education." Through this reflection, it is obvious that Militza is very insightful and uses her life experiences to affect her life in a positive way. Militza was not given a fair advantage as a foster child. She did not receive the education needed to compete in higher education. However, with the support of ACE Scholars Services, Militza achieved a bachelor's degree in psychology. While at CSU San Marcos, she was involved

with the Research Initiative for Scientific Enhancement program, which focuses on increasing the number of Ph.D. candidates from underrepresented groups in biomedical and behavioral research. In spring 2009, Militza had an opportunity to present her self-designed work in a research competition. She is currently working on a research project in conjunction with San Diego State and UC San Diego. These opportunities have strengthened Militza's candidacy for her Ph.D. She credits the campus for helping her make connections and providing her with the experience and opportunity to fulfill her dreams.



Tempest Jones

CSU East Bay,
BA Criminal Justice Administration



Tempest earned a bachelor's degree in criminal justice with a minor in human development and sociology. She plans to become a juvenile probation officer. She is thankful for the scholarships and academic support she received through the Renaissance Scholars program. Tempest says, "This program has given me the support and encouragement that I need to finish college." Tempest volunteered as an Outreach Liaison for the Renaissance Scholars program where she inspired other foster youth to enter higher education. She currently lives in San Leandro with her two-year-old son and 17-year-old nephew that she is raising. Tempest knows that, "Being a foster youth means that although I have been through a lot, I will not let it determine where I will go in life and who I will be."



Anastasiya Kamenko

UC Davis, BS Biochemistry,
Molecular Biology and Russian



As an undergraduate at UC Davis, Anastasiya was a resident advisor in the residence halls, a volunteer for the Pain Clinic at the UC Davis Medical Center, and a peer adviser in the Educational Opportunity Program and the Guardian Scholars Program. These endeavors illustrate her commitment and compassion for helping others. She aspires to be a medical doctor and plans to apply to medical school in 2010. Currently, Anastasiya is waiting to be selected to one of several postbaccalaureate internship programs she has applied for.



Sequilla Lee

UC Santa Cruz, BA Sociology



Looking back, Sequilla recalls the challenges she faced during her transition into college as a student from foster care. Moving from Rialto to Santa Cruz was a tremendous change for her. She credits UC Santa Cruz for teaching

her perseverance and self discipline. While at UCSC, she served as a board member of the African/Black Student Alliance, a core leader for the Black Sistahs United, and vice president of the local chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. Sequilla has also been involved with the Oakes Mentor Program as a Chancellor's Undergraduate Intern, the Oakes Residential Life staff, Destination Higher Education, the Smith Renaissance Program, and United Friends of the Children. Sequilla plans to return to Los Angeles after completing her teacher credential program at UCSC and become a history teacher.



Sara Ligda

San José State, MA Psychology



Sarah has participated in CME Society events as a mentor and panelist for our Luncheon for Higher Education Opportunities. She is receiving her master's degree in psychology.



Elizabeth Long

CSU Fullerton, BA Theater Arts



Elizabeth graduated with a bachelor's degree in theater arts with an emphasis in design and technical production. While at Cal State Fullerton, Elizabeth participated in several productions, including *Mother Courage*, *The American Clock* and *Come Back to the Five and Dime, Jimmy Dean, Jimmy Dean*. She is pursuing internship opportunities this summer to perform in live theater. Her goals are to become a director and to manage her own production company.



Christine Malazo

San José State, BA Psychology



After graduation, Christine plans to pursue her master's degree in occupational therapy. She wishes to open up her own occupational therapy practice to help injured athletes.



Karen Mays

CSU Fullerton, BS Health Science



Karen has a passion for helping others and earned a bachelor's degree in health science. She plans to pursue a master's degree in nursing so she can continue to help others in need. Karen is a peer mentor with the Orangewood Children's Foundation and serves on the California Community College Chancellor's Office foster youth panel, representing the Guardian Scholars program.

She is a member of Eta Sigma Gamma, the honor society for the CSUF Health Sciences Department, and a member of the Peer Health University Network on campus.



Stephanie Meyering

UC Santa Cruz, BA Business Management and Economics



Stephanie plans to enter law school or graduate school for her MBA now that she has graduated with a bachelor's degree in business management and economics.

Her advice is, "You really can do it! It might not be easy, but it will be amazing!"



Sy Mobley

Fullerton College, AA Theater Arts



Growing up, Sy heard messages that he would never succeed in life and college was not an option. Sy refused to accept these negative messages and enrolled at Fullerton College with a goal of earning an associate's degree in theater arts. Fullerton College offered Sy

the stability of a positive learning environment with other students who had similar goals and aspirations. Sy made lifelong friends and learned about great programs such as EOPS and the Guardian Scholars program. Sy met advisor, Dolores Cornejo, who worked tirelessly to ensure that Sy not only graduate but transfer to a college of his choosing. Over the next two years, he pursued his passion in theater arts and was offered a full scholarship to Chapman University in dance. Sy candidly shared that the challenges he faced during his transition from foster care to independence have played a vital role in his development. Sy says, "I take nothing for granted. I have learned that working hard academically will put me closer to my goal of being the first person in my family to earn a college degree." His dream is to open up a school for disadvantage students to gain a deeper appreciation for the arts. Sy Mobley embodies the saying, "Whatever the mind of man can conceive and believe, it can achieve."



Vanessa Payne

San José State, BA Behavioral Science



Vanessa graduated with her bachelor's degree in behavioral science. She enjoys speaking to current foster youth regarding college preparations and admissions requirements. She was an active CME Society member and has volunteered for numerous CME Society events. Vanessa currently works for the Santa Clara County Department of Family and Children's Services as a transitional housing liaison.



Ryan Pittman

UC Santa Cruz, BA Anthropology



Ryan earned his bachelor's degree in anthropology and has already made plans to travel the world. A graduate degree in ethnomusicology from UCLA is also in his future.



Iris Sosa

CSU East Bay,

BA Criminal Justice Administration



Iris wants to be a good example for her daughter and do what only a few foster youth have done, which is to graduate from college. When she entered the foster care system at age 15, college was not a possibility. All this

changed when she received her acceptance letter from Cal State East Bay. She saw that she had been given an opportunity to prove to herself that she could succeed in life. Although Iris has had many obstacles, she graduated with a bachelor's degree in criminal justice administration. Iris chose this field because, "I plan to work in family law and assist children and their families to find the right path. I want to show them that I was in their situation, and I made it. I want to be an example for my daughter and other foster kids."



Farah Stern

UC Santa Cruz, BA Politics



As a UC Santa Cruz graduate with a bachelor's degree in politics, Farah plans to enter the Peace Corps to become a teacher and work with children living in poverty.



Janay Swain

CSU Sacramento, MA Social Work



Janay is an expert on child welfare. She is the founder and youth leader for Paying Attention Using Self-Evaluation, a group of emancipated youth who provide consultation to Child Protective Services. While at Sacramento State, Janay served on the board of the Northern Training Academy and Guardian Scholars Program. Janay was also a leader and advocate with the California Youth Connection. Janay has been involved in several initiatives, including the National Governor's Association Workgroup on Educational Outcomes for Foster Youth, the Urban Institute Multi-Site Evaluation Team, the Sacramento County Casey Breakthrough Series Collaborative on Kinship Care, the Sacramento County Early Start To Emancipation Preparation Program, the Sacramento Casey Education Team, and the Sacramento California Permanency For Youth Project.

Janay is also a member of the Child Welfare Council that was established by Governor Schwarzenegger. Lastly, Janay delivered testimony on behalf of California to encourage congressional leaders to pass the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008, which offers federal help to children and families raised by relatives. After graduation, Janay is planning to work for the Sacramento County Child Protective Services as a social worker and eventually attend law school. Her goal is to find a career where she can advocate for and effect positive change in child welfare policy and practice. Janay believes that the difficulties foster youth face in care can have lasting impact. She shares, "It is up to us to make peace with our past and take control of our futures."



Joy Tehero

CSU Fullerton, BA Psychology



Joy graduated with a bachelor's degree in psychology. Her goals include performing research and obtaining a doctorate so she can use her expertise to serve the community. Originally from Monterey County, Joy went to Southern California to pursue a dream

of becoming a marine biologist. Her fields have evolved and now include evolutionary psychology, biological psychology and pharmaceuticals. While in college, Joy volunteered with the Orangewood Children's Foundation as a peer mentor to foster youth in care. Joy also participated in the Center for Digital Stories workshop through the Guardian Scholars program, which provides participants with opportunities to make peace with their past through the creation of multimedia videos.



Tina To

UC Santa Cruz, BA Legal Studies



Tina graduated with a bachelor's degree in legal studies. She will begin an internship in airport management and plans to enter graduate school in air transportation management through Embry Riddle Aeronautical University. Tina has a passion for travel and plans to use her work experience to travel the world. The one piece of advice Tina would like to share is, "College is one of the few ways you can free yourself from a life of poverty, crime, and meaningless jobs. It's your choice!"



Martha Torres

CSU Fullerton, BS Human Services



Martha's career goal is to become a librarian. She received a bachelor's degree in human services and has been admitted to the master's program in library science at San José State

University this fall. Martha has been involved with the Orangewood Children's Foundation as a peer mentor to foster youth. In 2008, she was a presenter at the "Casey: It's My Life Conference," which focused on youth transitioning out of foster care, and represented the Guardian Scholars program. Martha is a volunteer for the reading program at Santa Ana Library and tutors disadvantaged youth from low-income families. She believes literacy is the key to success.



Deyona Vanderhorst

CSU East Bay, BA Criminal Justice



Deyona, a transfer student from Laney College, persevered for three years in community college while working full time. Deyona made a connection with counselor Ann McMurdo who took time to provide information and support which led to her

successful transfer to CSU East Bay. One factor that made the greatest difference for Deyona was the opportunity to meet with her EOP and Renaissance Scholars advisors. Deyona is grateful to those who never gave up on her and supported her in reaching her goals. Deyona plans to find employment in the juvenile criminal justice field and make a difference in the lives of at-risk youth. She wants other youth to know that, "Without college, you can't get very far in life. In college, you can build your own support system and make the connections you need to be successful."



Sau Vong

UC Santa Cruz, BS Marine Biology



With a marine biology degree, Sau decided to change course, and will enter graduate school in 2010 to pursue a graduate degree in career counseling and psychology. He plans to become a career counselor at a community college. One piece of advice Sau would like

to share is, "It may seem an impossible endeavor, this crazy idea of getting a college degree, but through hard work and a willingness to succeed, it is possible."



Precious Ward

New York University,

Master of Public Administration (MPA)



At 25 years old, Precious Ward has achieved so much. She has graduated from New York University with a Master of Public Administration, emphasizing in nonprofit management. Her journey to New York came by way of UC Santa Cruz where she graduated with a degree in business and economics. Precious aged out of foster care and entered UC Santa Cruz, where she had a dream of becoming more

than a statistic. She soon realized that neither foster care nor public schools prepared her for the challenges she faced in college. Precious was able to persevere and connect to the Smith Renaissance Program. While at UC Santa Cruz, Precious advocated on behalf of foster youth for educational opportunities in college. She attributes her many leadership opportunities to the exposure she received as a community activist. Reflecting back, she owes her success to the mentors at the Smith Renaissance Program for providing a support system she needed. With the help of these mentors, Precious pursued her commitment to education and entered graduate school at New York University. She wants to encourage students from foster care to get involved on their campuses and in their communities. Precious plans to create positive change to assist disadvantaged individuals in her community.



Roderick Warren

Pasadena City College, AA



Roderick's story, like so many foster youth, included years of poverty, exposure to violence, and loss. Both of Roderick's parents abused drugs. His mother, struggling with her addiction, dropped him off at his grandfather's house one day and never returned.

For the next few years, his grandfather tried his best to raise him and provided the stability that Roderick needed. Roderick was only seven years old when his grandfather passed away. When Roderick moved to Pasadena to live with his aunt and uncle, he had many gaps in his education and struggled to trust his new guardians.

He attributes his success to the support and leadership training he received at New Directions, an organization serving at-risk youth. While at Pasadena City College, Roderick involved himself on campus by serving as vice president of the Black Student Alliance, as a representative for the Inter Club Council, and as a member of the Rights of Passage support group. His academic challenges did not deter him from his goal of earning a bachelor's degree. Roderick enrolled in the Transfer Admission Guarantee Program through Pasadena City College. This elite program required Roderick to continuously take a strenuous course load and complete academically demanding projects that would ultimately guarantee transfer to a college of his choosing. This summer, Roderick will begin a new chapter in his life by enrolling at UCLA. Roderick plans to enter law school and give back to his community. He believes that former foster youth can succeed if they are given three key things: education, exposure, and opportunity.



Debvora Woods

CSU East Bay, BA Criminal Justice



Although Debvora was in foster care from the day she was born, she did not let that stop her. She became a Renaissance Scholar at CSU East Bay in 2006 and loves the program because it

has helped her to work through the stigma of being in foster care. Devbora wants others to know, "Foster care to me is nothing negative at all. I do not know where I would be if they didn't have such a system. My experiences have shaped me into the person that I am today." Devbora credits her advisors in the Renaissance Scholars program in helping her get on the right path toward a degree in criminal justice.

The Importance of Evidence

by Jordan Horowitz, Cal-PASS

In the spring issue of the *College Pathways Newsletter*, we introduced the Cal-PASS Foster Youth Data Support Project funded by the Stuart Foundation. Since that time, we have worked with several universities/colleges to develop questions to be answered about foster youth on their campuses and in their programs. One message comes through loud and clear: We need data beyond the anecdotal if we are to improve educational programs and policies for foster youth.

There is a need to understand the educational progress of foster youth on campus and of the subpopulation of foster youth receiving services, and how these youth compare to the general student body. To do so, we are developing a password-protected, Web-based application to answer questions such as:

- What is the educational attainment of foster youth before they come to our campus?
- What are the initial English and math placement levels for foster youth on our campus?
- What are the rates of units attempted and completed for foster youth on our campus?
- What are the persistence-to-degree rates for foster youth on our campus?
- What are the placement levels and success rates for students who transfer from our campus to other California postsecondary educational institutions?

The answers to these questions will help identify the effects of programs and services on foster youth so campuses can engage in program improvement efforts. These answers also will allow programs to provide information to legislators to guide educational policy for foster youth.

Creating a Blueprint

Supporting Former Foster Youth In Higher Education

Creating A Blueprint Conference

October 28, 2009

The California Endowment
1000 North Alameda Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

California College Pathways and United Friends of the Children invite you to join us on October 28, 2009, at the California Endowment in downtown Los Angeles for the Creating a Blueprint Conference. This dynamic one-day conference offers opportunities for professionals working with current and former foster youth to come together with foster youth advocates to "Create a Blueprint" and to help ensure academic success for current and former foster youth. This professional development opportunity will feature a dozen workshops designed to address the needs and challenges of administrators, educators, policy makers, and providers who support foster youth in achieving their educational goals. Workshop topics will include strategies for effective program assessment, program sustainability, collaboration across multiple systems, strengthening the educational pipeline for foster youth, supporting mental health needs of foster youth, housing needs of youth in college, and much more.

Registration is now open, please visit www.cacollegepathways.org. Early bird registration is only \$75!

