A LIFETIME OF SERVICE
CAL STATE EAST BAY CELEBRATES PRESIDENT LEROY M. MORISHITA
To the Cal State East Bay community,

As I reflect on my 40 years working in higher education, serving as president of this wonderful university these past nine years has been the most fulfilling experience of my career. The alumni, students, faculty, staff, and administrators of Cal State East Bay are remarkable and inspiring, and I have been honored to lead this institution.

When I arrived in 2011, the university was emerging as a hidden gem in the region. My wife Barbara and I felt welcomed to the community from the start, and we have greatly enjoyed meeting so many Pioneers over the years and hearing the stories of how Cal State East Bay (and formerly Cal State Hayward) transformed their lives.

Shaking the hands of students as they crossed the graduation stage will always be one of my most cherished memories as president of the university. Knowing that our students fulfilled a dream not just of their own, but also of their families, is what makes higher education so powerful. I am grateful to those of you who have helped expand educational opportunities and access for our students to the projects, resources and experiences they need to become successful in their communities and the world.

Together, we have graduated more than 40,000 students, more than half of whom are first in their families to attend college. We successfully navigated a four-year process of converting from a quarter to a semester system. We hired 230 new tenure-track faculty with impressive credentials, backgrounds and perspectives, surpassing our goal of 350 tenure/tenure track faculty teaching at the university. And last year, the Rising in the East campaign concluded with more than $77 million raised, exceeding our $60 million fundraising goal.

We should be proud of what we have accomplished together, and you will see many of these achievements chronicled in the pages of this magazine. Stories include a feature about Renaissance Scholars who overcome incredible odds and one that demonstrates our Pioneers’ passion and drive to make Cal State East Bay more inclusive and equitable. Another focuses on recently hired tenure and tenure-track professors who bring new and fresh ideas to their classrooms and labs, and points to the diversity of those who lead our academic community. And finally, one story reflect the importance of philanthropists who fund programs to support the next generation of scientists.

Cal State East Bay will always be a university that centers on student success as the highest priority. I offer my heartfelt gratitude to the faculty, staff and administrators who have risen to meet the challenges over the years and lift the university to greater heights. Barbara and I look forward to the next chapter of our lives with excitement, and we are grateful for the support each of you have given to the university. As part of the Cal State East Bay family, we know the future is bright for our community.

Go Pioneers!

Dr. Leroy M. Morishita
President

Awards and Recognitions 2020

Each year, websites and organizations rank universities and colleges around the nation. They look at diversity, types of degrees, social mobility and more.

This year, Cal State East Bay was recognized on several lists, such as the Princeton Review, U.S. News & World Report and the Wall Street Journal. Also of note, several top rankings nationwide for online programs and value.

Here is a look at the various rankings Cal State East Bay received this year:

- **College Consensus**
  - Best Online Colleges and Universities (No. 38)
  - CNBCC Make It
    - Top 50 Colleges that Pay Off the Most
  - GuideToOnlineSchools.com
    - 2020 Best OnlineBachelor’s Degrees in California (No. 6 nationwide)
    - 2020 Best Online Colleges (No. 14 nationwide)
    - 2020 Best Online Bachelor’s Degree (No. 16 nationwide)

- **Insight Into Diversity Magazine Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award 2014-2019**

- **Learn.Org**
  - 50 Best Health Science Degrees (No. 10)
  - Best Online Colleges in California (No. 11)

- **San Francisco Business Times**
  - Largest Bay Area MBA Programs (No. 5)

- **ValueColleges.com**
  - 2020 Best Online Schools in California (No. 3 statewide)
  - 2021 Best Colleges Social Mobility - Regional (West) Universities
  - 2020 Environment/Diversity (No. 5)
  - 2020 Greatest Racial and Ethnic Diversity (No. 7)

- **The Hispanic Outlook on Education Magazine**
  - America’s Best Bang for the Buck Colleges (No. 49)
  - 2021 Best Colleges Social Mobility - Regional (West) Universities (No. 28)

- **The Princeton Review**
  - 2020 Best Colleges Social Mobility - Regional (West) Universities

- **The Stacker.com**
  - 2020 Best Business Schools
  - 2020 Best Business Schools in the West

- **U.S. News & World Report**
  - 2020 Top Performers on Social Mobility (No. 24)
  - 2020 Top Public Schools (No. 40)
  - 2020 Regional Universities in the West (No. 80)
  - 2020 U.S. News & World Report 2021 Best Colleges
  - 2021 Best Colleges Social Mobility - Regional (West) Universities (No. 28)

- **The Wall Street Journal**
  - 2020 Environment/Diversity (No. 5)

- **Washington Monthly**
  - America’s Best Bang for the Buck Colleges (No. 49)
An Award for Innovation, Leadership

Fadi Castronovo, Cal State East Bay assist
ant professor of engineering, knows a thing or two about innovation. His students are
actively engaged in virtual reality and virtual reality technology. His students have
participated in projects such as using virtual and AR/VR technology to
in digital design. Last summer, many spent time
in virtual reality to learn how to use
ual reality to make designs.

Castronovo has focused his effort on
his students to achieve high grades.

In addition to gifts to support the
plied Sciences Center, the East Bay Col-
lege Aggie Network, and advising, donors
ed $15 million from nearly 4,200 gifts
given by individuals and organizations, in-
cluding the Strupski and Koret foundations.

Much of Castronovo’s work at Cal State East
Bay has focused on hands-on learning leveraging multimedia, student research and
virtual reality technology. His students have
participated in projects such as using AR/VR
to create 3D designs to use virtual reality to
walk through the design, looking for imperfections or improvements.

Castronovo said he was not sure how his style
of teaching engages students differently, but
they also gain valuable skills
designed for hands-on projects.

“Having them engaged in hands-on pro-
jects is a way for them to gain those skillsets
making them more competitive in industry, engineers and managers.” Castronovo said.

“This year’s FILA awards will receive over $5 million, and an additional $10,000 will be allocated to the faculty members’.

Student Adrienne dating when the uni-
versity opened in 1957, CBE was official-
ly designated as a college in 1970 and was
originally housed in the Music Building
on the Hayward Campus. Today there are eight undergraduate programs, 10 graduate
programs, and numerous minors and certi-
fications offered in areas including account-
ing, economics, finance, human resources,
information technology, management,
making, and operations and supply chain
management.

Many graduates have gone on to work at
top accounting firms and tech companies,
or have started their own businesses, shap-
ing the business landscape in the Bay Area.

In the coming months, CBE will hold
several events, the first of which kicked off
with a virtual tribute October 17 during Cal State East Bay’s Forever Pioneer Week.

As part of the celebrations, the col-
lege released its new tagline “Empowering
Tomorrow-makers.”

Meet America’s Next Top Ranger

Cal State East Bay senior Celeste Morales
remembers everything about her first-ever
暑假 camp trip. The stars twinkled. Her
sleeping bag was cozy and warm after a day
of hiking to waterfalls. And dinner was
cooked over a fire.

Four years later, Morales is working to
ensure students just like her have access
to the outdoors. Thanks to this year’s
CSU Trustees’ Scholarship, she can worry
less about where she’ll get the money to
and financial need. Many, like Morales, are

Cal State East Bay senior Celeste Morales
also wants to bring more representa-

Cal State East Bay celebrates its sec-
and of its impact.

In addition to gifts to support the Ap-
plied Sciences Center, the East Bay Col-
lege Aggie Network, and advising, donors
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A LOOK BACK

PHOTOGRAPHY GARVIN TSO

(Left) Cal State East Bay President Leroy M. Morishita cheers at a homecoming game in January 2014. The game, against San Francisco State, was nicknamed "Battle of the Bay" and was part of the university’s homecoming celebration.

JESSE CANTLEY

(Right top) President Morishita visits with students at Al Fresco in 2013. The event is the university’s annual fall welcome festival.

(Right bottom) President Leroy Morishita and 22 other college officials signed a Declaration of Support for the Oakland Promise College Pathways program in 2016. Cal State East Bay now guarantees admission to every eligible Oakland student.
Top left: President Morishita attends a Hayward Promise Neighborhoods event in Hayward in October 2012. Learn more about HPN’s impact in the region on page 34.

Bottom left: In 2013, Cal State East Bay imploded the 13-story Warren Hall building after it was deemed seismically unsound. The building had been a fixture on the campus and in the East Bay since 1971.

Top right: Cal State East Bay opened its first Pioneers for H.O.P.E. food pantry in September 2016. An additional pantry was funded soon after when Warren, through a gift from alumnus Allen Warren, seen here, right.

Bottom right: The Cal State East Bay Institute for STEM Education aims to increase access to STEM education and career awareness for students of all levels and backgrounds regionally and statewide. Here, students in the Hands-On Science Teaching Labs (HOST Labs) program are seen participating in a science activity. Learn more about the HOST Labs program on page 34.
President Leroy Morishita poses for a photo with the 2019 Distinguished Alumni Award recipients. From left, Karen Oliver, James Hannan, Sara Toyloy and Ken Kahrs. The DAA gala is an annual event honoring alumni who have shown tremendous leadership in their professions and communities.

President Morishita congratulated graduates prior to the commencement ceremonies in 2019 after they were delayed a few hours due to inclement weather.

In spring 2018, Cal State East Bay unveiled its new Monument letters.

President Leroy Morishita and his wife Barbara Hedani-Morishita pose with a group of students for a holiday photo in winter 2019.
In the past 10 years, that goal has brought new faces, areas of focus, and demographics of the communities we serve and the students who attend provides evidence of our commitment to the university mission, the "Cal State East Bay is on the move, and it is the faculty who propel us of tenured and tenure-track faculty at the university to 350. Each year, drivers of retailer’s selection on the manufacturing strategy.”

She said the project “suggests that uncertainty of returned and collect -

A UNIVERSITY
FACULTY
FACULTY

Cal State East Bay increases total number of tenured, tenure-track faculty to more than 350

A t every fall convocation he’d led since he arrived at Cal State East Bay, University President Lenny M. Motishi has repeated a core part of his mission: to increase the number of tenured and tenure-track faculty at the university to 350. Each year, the goal of 350 was not an arbitrary number. Morishita said reaching a faculty size of 350 would create a better undergraduate and graduate experience. It would ensure the availability of course offerings to meet demand while decreasing class size. It would increase opportunities for student-faculty engagement. It would support undergraduate and graduate research. And finally, it would stabilize the university’s student-faculty ratios.

“If we are to advance on our aspirations in the areas of academic excellence, institutional distinction and regional influence, we must continue to invest in our tenure-track faculty and our staff,” Morishita said in 2012. Meet a few of the faculty members hired during President Morishita’s tenure and learn more about what they’re doing to help propel the university forward.

Instead, Cal State East Bay students are in the field, in labs and in the region, and they are building the skills they need to excel in the workforce.

Lan Wang

Time with CSUEB: 5 years
Area of Expertise: Operations management and business analytics

Wang recently published an article in Production and Operations Management titled “Design of the reverse channel for re-manufacturing: Must profit-maximization harm the environment?” She said the project “suggests that uncertainty of returned and collected products and the cost-effectiveness of reverse channels are the major drivers of retailer’s selection on the manufacturing strategy.”

Balaraman Rajan

Time with CSUEB: 6 years
Area of Expertise: Managing healthcare operations, efficiency and effectiveness of healthcare technology

Rajan recently worked on a research project on managing chronic conditions using mHealth—apps or programs that allow the user to reach out to medical professionals using mobile devices. The project analyzed the health benefits of using physician-supervised mobile applications for hypertension and investigated the role of reimbursement schemes in adopting mHealth apps.

Anna Rose Alexander

Time with CSUEB: 6 years
Area of Expertise: Latin American urban history

Alexander directs My Housing Story, oral history project conducted by Cal State East Bay faculty and history students that documents the housing experiences of people living in the San Francisco Bay Area. The collection of audio recordings will be available to researchers and the public through the Cal State East Bay University Libraries. Alexander is also a proud first-generation student who graduated from the California State University system and is looking forward to spending her career giving back to students similar to herself.

Arnab Mukherjea

Time with CSUEB: 7 years, 10 months
Area of Expertise: Social and cultural determinants of health disparity among diverse Asian American subgroups

Mukherjea was part of an inaugural cohort of Faculty Advising Fellows who provided guidance, intensive and targeted advising to improve retention and graduation rates among students in his department. He has also mentored students who have built valuable careers or attended graduate programs, and connected these students with funds from the Center for Student Research to support them in health-related scholarship and professional pursuits.

Tony Marks-Block

Time at CSUEB: 4 years
Area of Expertise: Indigenous fire management in California

Marks-Block researches the ecological and cultural benefits of prescribed fire. He is excited to work with undergraduate students at the university to evaluate the restoration of prescribed fire in the Bay Area to sustain Indigenous cultures and reduce the risks associated with wildfire. “To really heal from these wildfires, California will need to provide resources and land to Indigenous communities which retain fire relationships, to lead California toward a different form of land management that embraces its benefits when applied strategically and scientifically,” he said.

Jesús Oliver

Time with CSUEB: 4 years
Area of Expertise: Partial differential equations; active learning mathematics; general relativity

Oliver serves as the principal investigator for a National Science Foundation grant to fund Cal State East Bay’s SEMINAL Project. The project aims to infuse Preschoolers, Calculus 1 and Calculus 2 courses with active learning mathematics to support increased student success and equity. The approach of the SEMINAL team at CSU East Bay has been to build momentum for active learning at the departmental level through a Community of Practice model. The project has seen some early success in helping to lower the departmental DFW rates for Calculus 1. Oliver has also published a paper titled “A Vector Field Method for Radiating Black Hole Spacetimes” in a top 30 journal of mathematics. In addition, a manuscript submitted recently by Oliver (jointly with B. O’Kane) titled “A Community of Practice Model for In -
fusing Active Learning in the Classroom” has also been published in the peer-reviewed journal PRIMUS.

Izzet Darendeli

Time at CSUEB: 5 years
Area of Expertise: Strategic management and Alexander

Darendeli became the associate director of the university’s Smith Center in 2017 and planned and executed several events featuring entrepreneurs, professionals and innovators from the Bay Area. He also helped students create the first-ever entrepreneurship-oriented student association called the U.P. Club, which organized the campus’ first-ever “pitch day.”

Ruth M. Tinnacher

Time at CSUEB: 4 years, 4 months
Area of Expertise: Environmental geochemistry/radiochemistry

Tinnacher received external funding from the U.S. Department of Energy’s Nuclear Engineering University Program for two separate three-year student-involved research projects focused on uranium mobility in future nuclear waste repositories. She also initiated and currently manages the Berkeley Lab/CSUEB intern pilot program that allows three CSUEB master’s students per year to perform research with Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory scientists and university faculty.

Saenya Ann

Time at CSUEB: 5 years
Area of Expertise: Customer service, service marketing; hospitality and tourism management

Ann has published five research papers in international refereed journals and seven conference papers in four international conference proceedings since starting at the university. Her most significant achievements during her time at Cal State East Bay has been publishing “Motivating senior employees in the hospitality industry” in January 2020 in the International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management (is 5.667 impact factor in 2019 Social Science Citation Index). She has also worked with several hospitality, recreation and tourism students on research that has received the ‘best paper’ awards from the Ko -rean-American Hospitality and Tourism Educators Association.

Kathryn Hayes

Time at CSUEB: 5 years, 4 months
Area of Expertise: Educational leadership, sources include critical qualitative analysis and research practices for social justice

In recent years, Dr. Hayes has worked to improve her teaching and create a syllabus that better reflects her students’ diversity, and has been doing research to support her development as a social justice-focused educator. Her research includes the following questions: How can districts build organ -izational capacity to support and sustain equity-based science education; how can professional development help teachers improve their in -structional practices, especially those that serve marginalized students; and how does educational policy affect science education? She has collaborated in writing 11 grant proposals totaling $17.7 million, including a $3.4 million grant from the National Science Foundation.
Mind Your Manners

Annual etiquette dinner hosted by President Morishita teaches more than which fork to use when

BY DAN FOST

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS CHANGED SOCIAL BEHAVIOR. We’ve stopped shaking hands. Even elbow bumps are discouraged in favor of staying six feet apart. But good manners have been with us for centuries and are likely to persist.

Thomas Padron, PhD, Cal State East Bay’s Hospitality and Tourism program coordinator, can’t stage his renowned “etiquette dinners,” where 200 people gather formally to practice the finer points of behavior. But he is still preaching the gospel of good manners.

“Etiquette is more important than ever, as etiquette is about ‘them’ (others) and less about ‘me’ (us),” Padron said in an email. He notes that coronavirus customs—wearing a mask, physically distancing, washing your hands—are “about protecting others,” and their lessons should outlive the pandemic. Placing the regard for others before ourselves is based on etiquette, just like opening doors for others.

At the etiquette dinners, hosted by President Leroy M. Morishita since 2014, students in Padron’s program would dress up and put into practice everything they learned, from how to make eye contact to which fork to use for which course. (The shutdown caused the cancellation of last spring’s dinner; Padron cautiously hopes to have one in spring 2021.)

The rules may seem silly to some, like something they’ve seen on “Downton Abbey,” a vestige of a time and a place that doesn’t apply to 21st-century California. Nothing could be further from the truth. Padron drills home a key point: Etiquette is all about respect.

“Etiquette is about the students,” Padron said. “It’s about how you present yourself. Etiquette is being respectful toward someone else. I care that theme throughout the entire meal.”

Etiquette didn’t seem natural to Padron, who was a first-generation college student, like many of his own students. He learned it in a culinary academy and developed a passion for it.

Padron makes sure the dinner feels rooted in the students’ lives. “I try to make it approachable and not snooty, not hoity toity, not haughty,” he said.

Simran Arora, a nurse who graduated in 2019, said she learned a lot when she participated in that year’s dinner. “I still have pieces of paper with a couple of tips hanging in my room to this day,” she said. “It’s definitely beneficial,” she said. “You never know when you’ll be invited to a formal dinner. If I go into management, I’ll have to revisit my old notes. It will be very relevant soon.”

BY DAN FOST
“I want them to be uncomfortable to get to comfort. Etiquette is uncomfortableness. How you stand, bow, shake hands. You’re training yourself to act and look a different way.”
—Assistant Professor Thomas Padron

The dinners take place on campus, in the University Union multipurpose room. As many as 250 graduating seniors are seated at tables, with each table hosted by a member of President玫toshita’s cabinet. Padron has to brief the adults on etiquette as well, as often they are intimidated by the rules.

Even Mori-shita seems to learn a few things. Padron said the president has told him that the dinner with his wife Barbara was “the best thing you can do for your first few. It’s to stay to be fun. It’s to stay to be fun. It’s one of the things I require in the meal, that the phone is not on the table, “he said. “It’s very difficult for them. This is a three-hour meal from 5-8 p.m.”

Throughout the meal, Padron will walk around the room and offer commentary. His biggest peeve? When students take their, “He told me, ‘You have to serve before you can sit,’ ” said Padron. “That’s how you get to taste everything.”

One evening begins with hors d’oeuvres, a chance for the students to “My self was so well, they carried themselves so well,” he said. “You’re training yourself to act and look a different way.”

When Padron’s students get jobs in the hospitality industry, he often hears from employers, “Your self was so well, they carried themselves so well,” he said. “You’re training yourself to act and look a different way.”

If they’re uncomfortable, “That’s all right. “I want them to be uncomfortable to get to comfort. Etiquette is uncomfortableness. How you stand, bow, shake hands. You’re training yourself to act and look a different way.”

When Padron’s students get jobs in the hospitality industry, he often hears from employers, “Your self was so well, they carried themselves so well,” he said. “You’re training yourself to act and look a different way.”

Although he has years of experience, particularly waiting tables at his family’s restaurants, Acqua E’ Farina in downtown Hayward, he still learned a great deal at the etiquette dinner.

“Every day, you learn, even if you’ve been in the industry for 20 years,” Padron said. “You’re still learning, you’re still teaching, you’re still getting experience.”

“Nobody eats until everything is put down.”

TOASTING: Don’t clink glasses. “That’s considered rude in Europe. It’s acceptable here, but I like to use the European rules.”

NAPKINS: “This is the thing that everybody does wrong. They put it on their chair. Why would you put the thing you put on your mouth and face, where you put your butt?” Instead, if you have to leave the table, place the napkin on the back of the chair or to the left side of the plate. “The key thing is folding it up. It signals the wait staff that you’re coming back.”

WHEN TO EAT: “Nobody eats until everything is put down.”

ELBOWS: The general rule is to keep elbows off the table, but some cultures and regions of the U.S. allow it. Pick up cues from your host.

FORKS: Keep your fork in your left hand. That’s the European style. Right-handed fork use has become so commonplace—even what Padron calls the “zigg zag” maneuver of cutting with the right hand and then switching to the fork—that it’s permissible. But, Padron says, “My goal is, the entire meal is all European. You can’t go wrong with the European rules.”

CONVERSATION: Keep the conversation balanced between all guests, including everyone. Ask about people’s interests; if one person goes on too much, ask others for their perspective.
Advocating for a Hidden Population

By Natalie Feulner  Photography: Garvin Tso

Renaissance Scholars program provides support, resources for former foster youth

Esther Fultz poses for a photo at Cal State East Bay. Fultz said the Renaissance Scholars program was life-changing and a key reason she was able to successfully graduate from the university.

Dian Rodriguez was a senior in high school when she entered the foster care system.

Three months and six homes later, she found herself walking the Cal State East Bay campus. “I remember thinking ‘I can see myself walking this campus every day, I feel comfortable, this is going to be my home for the next four years,’” Rodriguez said.

And home it was.

A Renaissance Scholar and human development student, Rodriguez not only found a home at Cal State East Bay, but she also found a community and a family.

Her story and that of many other Renaissance Scholars is one of persistence and grit in the face of adversity. And through each, a common thread of a program started almost two decades ago that has been key to the success of dozens of former foster youth.
“Foster youth who are in college are strong, there’s a small percentage of us, and we are thriving. We are so thankful for the programs that help, it’s hard, but I wouldn’t be where I am today without the support I had.”

— Renaissance Scholar Dian Rodríguez

A HIDDEN POPULATION

According to the National Foster Youth Institute, only half of the youth raised in foster care end up finishing high school, and less than 3 percent graduate from a four-year college compared to 7 out of 10 children raised in loving homes who want to pursue college.

“Foster youth are kind of a hidden population,” said Lottie Adediji, former program coordinator for the Renaissance Scholars Program. “It’s not like they tell people [they’re in foster care], and because they’re kids, they aren’t advocating for themselves, so it becomes up to the adults around.”

Cal State East Bay’s Renaissance Scholars Program began in 2006 with around 20 students and focused on advising and counseling. Three days, close to 50 students are actively involved in the program, which has grown upwards of $55,000 to students in scholarships and emergency funding.

Esther Fultz, 25, a hospitality, recreation and tourism alumna, recalled a time during her first few years at Cal State East Bay when she needed to have emergency dental work performed. The procedure cost several thousand dollars, money Fultz didn’t have. But through Renaissance Scholars, she was able to secure enough support to pay for the procedure and had people checking in on her as she recovered.

“It was a really scary time and I am so grateful for Renaissance Scholars. They’ve been a really important group,” Adediji said. “We have people in the community who are ready to help us grow, and I think we are ready to take that and go with it.”

Over the years, Renaissance alumni have gone on to be nurses, project managers, audiologists and business owners. Two, Charvette Blincoe and Prince Jackson, were previously named to Cal State East Bay’s 40 Under 40 list.

“I’m proud of their accomplishments,” Adediji said. “The things that the students do [after Renaissance Scholars] are my greatest pride.”

Since its inception in 2006, the Renaissance Scholars program has grown and joined a national movement to support foster youth. Staff report to an advisory board that includes Barbara Hedani-Morishita, University President Leroy M. Morishita’s wife, and donor Jobi Servatius.

“For me, they’ve been a really important group,” Fultz said. “I have my family, my parents, but the support I received was so much more.”

According to Adediji, students who have received a scholarship or financial support through the program are far more likely to graduate or continue their education than their peers who do not receive financial support.

In addition to scholarships, the Renaissance Scholars program offers students priority placement in on-campus housing. Students are allowed to stay on campus during school breaks and often receive food and other household items to help them transition into living on their own. A textbook-lending program provides assistance with acquiring learning materials, and students receive priority registration and regular check-ins with academic counselors to ensure they’re on-track toward graduation.

“A lot of kids have the support of their families, but especially with foster youth, it is sometimes really hard because they don’t have the tools, resources, so to have that from a college campus was really helpful and impactful,” said alumna Lottie Fultz and Esther Fultz’s twin.

A PLACE TO CALL HOME

For the Fultz twins, having a place to land and begin rebuilding their lives after an abusive childhood was “life changing.”

Esther Fultz was diagnosed with complex post-traumatic stress disorder when she was 25 and now advocates for other scholars to seek therapy. Before her diagnosis, she said she often relied on the support of Adediji and Renaissance Scholars Director Saleem Gilmore.

“I came from an abusive foster family, so college was my way out; it was the only way I knew I could have a chance, so I can’t to college,” Esther Fultz said.

Adediji and Lottie Fultz shared similar sentiments.

“Being here means being able to process ‘the yellow house blues’ as I call it” Lottie Fultz said. “Any family will have issues, but what happens to kids who grow up in places like the yellow house I grew up in is that when you get past you, you can begin to process it.”

In addition to the support they received from the Renaissance Scholars program, other initiatives on campus such as the Diversity and Student Inclusion Center allowed them to settle into their new life on campus and begin healing.

“Working at the DISC, and with Josquila Murphy and Shannon Cooksan, I was put in an environment where all of the things I was personally experiencing around my identities and mental health, was normalized,” Lottie Fultz said. “I was able to access resources on campus because there wasn’t a shame or stigma when it came to accessing what [resources] for the needs you might have.”

For Rodriguez, who had her eyes set on college since her mother died when she was 15 years-old, attending university with an active Renaissance Scholars program was crucial.

“I knew [college was] what she wanted for me, so I would tell myself ‘she’s going to be worth it in the end,’” she said. “And, I wanted to be at a school where I would have the support I needed.”

This summer, Rodriguez will graduate debt-free. Since joining Renaissance Scholars four years ago, she has worked to apply for scholarships and funding for everything from books to tuition.

“Through the program, I was able to find good scholarships, and I just applied and applied, and she said, ‘I was very big on scholarships. I figured I’m already struggling as it is, so if there’s money out there, I was going to apply for it.’”

But the support was more than access to scholarships and funding. Rodriguez said some of her fellow scholars became friends, and even those who weren’t always maintained a sense of community and leaned on each other for support.

“It was a community that felt good, and we made it safe. Whatever was said there was kept there,” she said.

A CALL TO GIVE BACK

For some of the former foster youth who go through the Renaissance Scholars program, graduation is a chance to give back and support the next generation of students.

Lottie Fultz, for example, volunteers in the summer at a program called Camp Phoenix, which helps close the academic achievement gap for Black and Latinx youth. Esther Fultz is currently working with youth at the YMCA, speaks at Renaissance Scholars events, and serves as an advocate for former and current foster youth through California Youth Connection.

Through the program, I was able to find good scholarships, and I just applied and applied, and she said, ‘I was very big on scholarships. I figured I’m already struggling as it is, so if there’s money out there, I was going to apply for it.’”

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“It was a really scary time and I am so grateful for Renaissance Scholars. They’ve been a really important group,” Fultz said. “I have my family, my parents, but the support I received was so much more.”

According to Adediji, students who have received a scholarship or financial support through the program are far more likely to graduate or continue their education than their peers who do not receive financial support.

In addition to scholarships, the Renaissance Scholars program offers students priority placement in on-campus housing. Students are allowed to stay on campus during school breaks and often receive food and other household items to help them transition into living on their own. A textbook-lending program provides assistance with acquiring learning materials, and students receive priority registration and regular check-ins with academic counselors to ensure they’re on-track toward graduation.

“A lot of kids have the support of their families, but especially with foster youth, it is sometimes really hard because they don’t have the tools, resources, so to have that from a college campus was really helpful and impactful,” said alumna Lottie Fultz and Esther Fultz’s twin.

For Rodriguez, who had her eyes set on college since her mother died when she was 15 years-old, attending university with an active Renaissance Scholars program was crucial.

“I knew [college was] what she wanted for me, so I would tell myself ‘she’s going to be worth it in the end,’” she said. “And, I wanted to be at a school where I would have the support I needed.”

This summer, Rodriguez will graduate debt-free. Since joining Renaissance Scholars four years ago, she has worked to apply for scholarships and funding for everything from books to tuition.

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But the support was more than access to scholarships and funding. Rodriguez said some of her fellow scholars became friends, and even those who weren’t always maintained a sense of community and leaned on each other for support.

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“I advocate for youth now because, for me, I almost didn’t make it because of the obstacles it had on my mental health, it was beyond overwhelming,” Esther Fultz said. “I didn’t know my rights when I was younger. If people in high school knew I was in foster care … there were so many instances where someone could have stepped in. They would have been able to better help me, and I would’ve been able to better advocate for myself.”

As for Rodriguez, she volunteers with several programs in San Mateo County and has found many local foster youth appreciate having an older mentor to look up to who can relate to their experiences.

“Knowing what I went through, they can talk to me,” Rodriguez said. “It may not be the same story, but I can understand on a certain level.”

Each of the schools is now on their individual journeys but look back fondly at the formative years they spent at Cal State East Bay and the sense of community and support they found with one another and the staff who supported them.

Esther Fultz recently moved into her own apartment. Before she graduated, Adediji continued to help her with the transition out of college, connecting her to resources and transitional housing.

“For the first time in my life, I have a safe place,” Esther Fultz said. “I have my own safe place, and that in and of itself is phenomenality. I never thought this would be possible.”

Lottie Fultz is a teacher’s assistant for a Mandarin immersion program and hopes to become a certified behavioral aid.

And Rodriguez, who is finishing her last semester of classes and looking forward to graduation, hopes people realize the strength of foster youth and the determination it takes to not only start college but earn a degree.

“Foster youth who are in college are strong, there’s a small percent of us, and we are thriving,” she said. “We are so thankful for the programs that help, it’s hard, but I wouldn’t be where I am today without the support I had.”

COLLEGE BY THE NUMBERS

• Nationwide, only HALF OF ALL FOSTER youth finish high school
• Less than 3 PERCENT of foster youth graduate from a four-year university or college
• Among foster youth who pursue college, just 49 PERCENT complete the first two semesters
• Roughly 35,000 current and former foster youth attend California colleges and universities

Sources: National Foster Youth Institute, CalYOUTH, EdSource
As many advocates know, the word "pipeline" dominates every educator’s discussion of programs that help underserved students master science, technology, engineering and mathematics. To be effective, advocates say, these programs must reach out to students from their earliest school years and continue through high school, college and perhaps even graduate school. Data shows that students emerge from this multyear pipeline with greatly improved job prospects, higher starting salaries, and a level of science literacy that citizens must develop to be fully engaged in our increasingly technological society.

But the COVID-19 pandemic that shut down Bay Area schools and classrooms in March 2020 changed everything for administrators of STEM programs. Several acknowledged being in triage mode. Many STEM advocates are still brainstorming how to gear teaching methods to the pandemic’s new normal of remote, home-based learning.

Shortly after Cal State East Bay moved to remote learning, Carolyn Nelson, recently retired dean and principal investigator for the Hayward Promise Neighborhoods program, was on a conference call with the federal Department of Education and 80 Promise Neighborhood leaders across the U.S. They covered the need to distribute Chromebooks to students’ homes, food insecurity, and moving IT resources online.

“We discussed how the virus was impacting families in these vulnerable, underserved communities,” said Nelson. “A middle school principal raised the issue of internet connectivity. Because the digital divide is quite pernicious. It’s not about having devices anymore. Now it’s about inequitable broadband access throughout a school district.”

Nelson quickly reached out to Susie Koblin, a project manager for HPN who works with CSU East Bay’s IT department.

“She must have researched this problem like crazy, because in three days, she gave me numerous, helpful links to share with the principal,” Nelson recalled. “And she discovered that Comcast and other network providers were making Wi-Fi connectivity available to communities free for 90 days. We adopted this approach. We’re lucky that she really took the issue to heart.”

That formula—a mix of improvisation, research, experimentation and idea sharing with a close-knit community offering guidance and encouragement—is the very definition of the scientific method and the animating principle behind Cal State East Bay’s many STEM education programs.

Another essential ingredient is confidence. In a look at three of the university’s programs focused on STEM education, educators explained that having confidence and asking questions are often the first steps to gaining mastery over STEM subjects. 

HOST LABS GO VIRTUAL

Danika LeDuc, associate dean for the College of Sciences at Cal State East Bay, is optimistic, having strategized with her colleagues on innovative ways to replicate the immersive learning environment of the university’s Hands-On Science Teaching (HOST) Labs during state-mandated shelter-in-place requirements.

“The teaching and training program, launched in 2014 with initial grants from the National Science Foundation and Stephen Rechtel Jr. Foundation, normally takes place in one of two STEM education rooms on either the Hayward or Concord campuses.

Classroom activities for the seven field trips that take place each semester are designed and conducted by CSU students, most of whom are planning careers as science educators. Thus far, 137 CSU students have served as “science guides,” working with more than 2,600 school children since the program’s inception.

“When they arrive in the HOST Lab, the fifth-graders don lab coats and goggles—but not for safety reasons. “I want to spark their imaginations and see themselves as potential scientists,” said LeDuc, a chemist by training. “This puts them directly into that frame of thought.”

During the fall 2020 semester, CSU students worked with online partners to design activities for remote learning. “That was not a big switch,” said LeDuc, explaining how her colleagues purposefully chose inexpensive items that are easy to find at the grocery or hardware store. “We want the visiting teachers to take these ideas back to their classrooms without feeling limited by lack of budget or resources.”
Instead of in-person class meetings, the Cal State East Bay students practiced their teaching skills over Zoom, with a family member or roommate filming their effort. Department instructors taught the students how to edit that material and produced a special montage to use for future job interviews and to share with teachers through the campus’s Institute for STEM Education.

While many policymakers point to STEM’s impact on job seekers, LeDuc stresses the social and emotional value of HOST Labs. “Kids are born with a natural curiosity,” she said. “Anything you can do to show a late tweener or early teenager that science is cool—and not boring or too difficult—is worth doing.”

LeDuc warns that too many children still can’t imagine themselves mastering science.

“I remember one program focusing on physics was led by a student, wearing her lab coat, her name tag, and one of our “Science Guide” badges,” LeDuc said. “When the kids arrived, one actually said, ‘Wow—you’re a female scientist? I didn’t know women could be scientists!’ It floors me to think that kind of misconception still exists.”

Creating a Bridge

Promise Neighborhoods are a collection of partners working together to make an impact. Formulation of this place-based initiative came from a promise by President Barack Obama during his 2008 campaign, and was initiated across the country by his Secretary of Education Arne Duncan following Obama’s election.

“It’s a movement that highlights systemic reform,” said Melinda Hall, Cal State East Bay executive director of HPN. “Instead of planning separately or in silos, we work together and share resources so we’re not reinventing the wheel with each organization or plan.”

The university launched the “Hayward Promise Neighborhood System” in 2012, initially focusing on the Jackson Triangle area of Hayward.

“HPNs is the bridge between the university and the community,” said Nelson, the retired dean. “Sometimes it’s hard to separate HPN from what Cal State East Bay is doing, because we work so closely with parents and community members. We have a strong network of parents, advisors and educators, so when something like coronavirus hits, we know who to call.”

For HPN participants, that meant delivering food and toiletries to homeseekers, providing online advice to K-12 public school teachers, emailing resource lists to school principals, as well as providing the site-based STEM tutoring, classroom assistance and special science-related activities of the pre-pandemic era.

“Project-based learning will continue to be central to STEM education,” according to Hall, research shows that women and girls are more engaged in learning science concepts when teachers can demonstrate a connection to concrete problems or real-world issues.

One example is the “We Share Solar” project, where middle school students built a solar-powered generator inside a suitcase.

“We have such a high percentage of children in our Hayward district that are first-generation students and I could see their emotional engagement with this,” said Nelson. “When the students demonstrated the solar suitcases in their classrooms, you could have heard a pin drop. The kids were so excited!”

The Next Cohort of STEM Teachers

This year, the MESA program celebrated its 50th anniversary. MESA launched as a pre-college intervention program in 1970 with 25 students at Oakland Technical High School to develop confidence, leadership skills, and mastery in math, engineering and science. Prompted by a late 1960s study that questioned UC Berkeley College of Engineering’s lack of student diversity, MESA’s model of project-based learning for high school and middle school students has spread across the country.

At Cal State East Bay, the Institute for STEM Education on the Hayward campus oversees an expanded MESA program addressing the needs of 20 middle and high schools in Alameda and Contra Costa counties. These include in-person quarterly meetings and other professional development resources for 28 credentialed teachers serving as MESA advisors in these school districts. They work with 600 students in after-school STEM-based activities focused on engineering design principles.

“We like to say the MESA program was STEM education before the acronym was coined,” said Janiene Langford, interim MESA program director. “There’s an absolute teacher shortage in K-12 STEM education. It’s crucial to support our current educators and help build the next cohort of STEM teachers.”

MESA Day is a statewide contest and the culminating event of the yearlong after-school program. Students and their collaboratively built prototypes are to be judged by MESA advisors and sponsors.

“I’ve seen young students burst into tears when their prototypes won first place,” said Langford. “For me, that affirms how this program builds confidence, exposes talent, and encourages kids to go forward. While the kids are competitors, there’s also a great sense of community here. They really do make new friends through the day, and get to interact with faculty and professionals who answer questions and share their experiences.”

MESA’s motto is “delivering California’s future STEM workforce.” By 2022, California is expected to have the largest STEM workforce in the nation, with more than 1.4 million jobs in need of talent, according to recent state labor statistics. Some say those predictions are a bit shaky now that the country has entered a recession due to the pandemic. However, a 2012 Bay Area Council report shows that high-tech jobs are more resilient to economic downturns than other private sector industries, pay more, and hold the most promise for continued growth.

“We do talk about STEM jobs and workforce preparedness,” said Langford. “But having a STEM-literate society is crucial. When a crisis like the pandemic appears, it’s urgent to have people who can sift through information. It’s just as important for individuals to understand things rationally, which comes from a familiarity with the scientific method, working out what’s proven, real and true.”
Cal State East Bay business and marketing student Lauren Daniels, 21, is an artist who paints under the name "Pieces by Peezy." Her most recent pieces in Palm Springs and downtown Oakland on plywood near the police department speak to activism in the current Black Lives Matter movement. East Bay Magazine recently sat down with Daniels to talk about her work, art and activism. (These answers have been edited for brevity and clarity.)

When did you start painting, and why?
When I was a child, my mom, who is creative as well, would always have us painting or doing some kind of craft. And then in high school I started working with the Associated Student Body making posters with cartoon-like characters for pep rallies and events, and I realized kids started taking my posters home with them. I saw people painting on Twitter and realized I could do that too.

What inspires your work?
The things around me, things I see or things that upset me. I like to make protest art because I feel there are things these days that need to be said. So I put that into my art. I feel it’s often things that can be controversial but also influential. For example, my Black Lives Matter piece is a symbol of how the city was responding to the protests; seeing the wood on all the storefronts was a symbol in itself and a blank canvas.

Tell me about your piece in Oakland and why you created it.
I like to use quotes and messages in my work, and this [piece in downtown Oakland] was something I had already done as a digital art piece and thought ‘this needs to be in the real world.’ It is a vibrant piece with a TV screen showing what looks like an error, and has a quote about how the media controls the masses. We all like to look to TV and feed into it; these days you can look at the news station that fits your beliefs instead of having a neutral source of information.

What has been the response so far?
I’ve gotten so much love. People I don’t even know will stop by to take pictures. I think people resonate so much with it because it’s here in the outside world. To see something about how we feel on the inside, that’s on the outside and not hiding behind a profile, is powerful.

Do you consider your art a form of activism and why?
I definitely think art is activism. Music, art, they persuade people and connect them on a deeper level. You can know a lot about somebody by the type of art they enjoy or the music they listen to.

What’s next for you?
I want to continue making protest art and build my business, not just in California, but I want to travel and make my art in different places. This is an international problem.

Where can people find your piece and other work you’ve done?
My Black Lives Matter piece is on Broadway and 8th Street in Oakland, and more of my work is on Instagram (@PiecesbyPeezy) and on Etsy at piecesbypeezy.etsy.com. (pictured below)
Alumni Activists Look Back at Their Time at Cal State East Bay

By Dan Fost

Cal State East Bay once had so few minority students, faculty or employees that it was known as “Whitey’s school.” That reputation is nearly inconceivable today, when Cal State East Bay stands as one of the most diverse college campuses in the country, with more than two-thirds of its enrollees students of color.

Spurred to Activism

Cal State East Bay’s former President Ellis McCune said he had to work to overcome the “whitey” stigma attached to the school he arrived at in 1967, when it was still Hayward State College. But he was not alone: Spurred by a culture of activism that defines the university to this day, McCune and many others transformed the university over the years to a place that celebrates its diversity.
The work to achieve both equity and equality continues, although activist Larry Brooks—who earned a bachelor’s in 1977 and a master’s in 1984 from then-Cal State Hayward—said, “I would still say they’re a ways to go.”

Brooks and other activists from the past several decades at Cal State East Bay recently participated in a panel about the university’s history of activism. Panelists shared their memories of protesting and pushing for more equity on campus and their thoughts on ways to continue the work started by those who came before them.

“I would like to see more indications as to the contributions the people of color have made on campus,” Brooks said. “There are no buildings, no statues, that recognize the history of African American people on campus. That’s something that certainly should be done in order to make people feel like they’re represented on campus.”

Similarly, more recent graduates have fought for an African American Student Resource Center. When they raise their voices, they don’t always feel they’re heard. But they continue to raise them, and say they’ve made progress, in part thanks to the support of faculty and staff.

Stacia Echols, a 2020 graduate, said she and her fellow activists worked with Alani Richardson, executive director for Cal State East Bay’s Student Equity and Success Programs, to incorporate the center into existing programs such as the Sankofs Scholars Program to give Black students support while the university proceeds with center into existing programs such as the Sankofs Scholars Program to give Black students support while the university proceeds with "We had a difference of opinion about why people go to college,” Brooks said. “For those of us people of color, in many cases we were the first in our families to go to college.”

Brooks earned his degree in speech pathology and audiology, and later returned for a master’s in public administration, which he saw as a ticket to stable government work. After graduation he worked in code enforcement in Sacramento, and ultimately wound up back in the Bay Area, where he runs the Alameda County Lead Poisoning Prevention Program.

“I felt my gift from God is service,” he said. “I have always been oriented toward some type of service. My education at [Cal State East Bay] and my activism prompted me for this role of advocating for safe and healthy housing for all.”

He also served on Cal State East Bay’s alumni board as a way to give back—and to remind people today of the struggles that took place before.

“We have to bring people together culturally and ethnically, especially in this time of Black Lives Matter,” Brooks said. “There is really going to have to be some strategies put together to acknowledge that on campus.”

Ever the activist, he remains hopeful that people’s voices will be heard and institutions will change.

“The way institutions are calling for redirecting funds from law enforcement into programs helpful to the Black community, this is just like people are calling for redirecting funds from law enforcement into programs helpful to the Black community, this is really the time to look at how funding might be redirected in the university in a more supportive of students of color,” Brooks said. “Part of the healing that needs to take place can be inspired by the actions of the university.”

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Brooks said he felt McCune’s understanding of education was centered on the notion of students gaining enlightenment. However, Brooks felt that didn’t match the reality of many students’ lives.

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AFTER SIX DECADES OF CULTIVATING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS, Cal State East Bay is inextricably woven into the vibrant fabric that makes up the regional landscape.

Today, the university’s undeniable impact can be felt broadly, in places ranging from preschools to high schools, from churches to start-ups, from laundromats to the Capitol.

Under Cal State East Bay President Leroy M. Morishita, who joined the university in 2011 and will retire Dec. 31, the university fast-forwarded its mission to empower a new generation of community changemakers by putting secondary education directly in their sights.

Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf, a founding board member of the nonprofit Oakland Promise, said Cal State East Bay is one of the city’s most engaged allies, dedicated to transforming generational poverty in Oakland.

“He has been in this movement to inspire every child born in Oakland with the idea that they are college-bound material, that an education is their birthright,” Schaaf said. “He not only believes that he shows it with his actions every day.”

Oakland Promise, just one of Cal State East Bay’s many community partners, works to ensure that every child in Oakland Unified, where about 70 percent of students are low-income, graduates from high school ready for college and career. Cal State East Bay guarantees admission to every eligible Oakland student.

“When I think about the 40,000 students who have (Morishita’s) name on their diploma—the most valuable thing they will ever own—it makes me so proud that the East Bay has been blessed,” Schaaf said.

The broad impact? Since launching in 2016, Oakland Promise and its partners have encouraged more than 850 families to start college savings accounts for their children. They have awarded early college scholarships to 15,000 elementary school students and saw more Oakland Promise participants apply to college, especially African American and Latinx students.

In another city 15 miles south of Oakland, Cal State East Bay has also nurtured poignant partnerships in Hayward and devoted itself to the success of impoverished communities. ▶
“President Morishita’s vision for educating our youth has extended well beyond the Cal State East Bay campus as evidenced by his leadership of our Hayward Promise Neighborhoods grant to create a Pre-kindergarten-to-college pipeline of services and support for the most vulnerable students and families in Hayward,” said Hayward Unified School District Superintendent Matt Wayne. “He has been a tremendous partner in bringing resources to the community to ensure that students at any age have access to the education they deserve.”

Cal State East Bay is the lead agency for Hayward Promise Neighborhoods, which is leading “cradle-to-career” programs benefiting the Ashland, Cherryland and Jackson Triangle neighborhoods, where many families struggle with low-income, academic performance, crime, and health challenges.

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Cal State East Bay undergrads also participate in Hayward Promise through the Promise Intensives program. They apply for paid internships in grade schools, often the ones they graduated from, and Chabot College, Tubbsos Vapor Health Center, and city offices. It’s a win-win-win for everyone involved.

University students earn professional experience and paychecks. Public grade schools and other agencies receive high-impact help. And young kids get to meet and see their futures in these college-going role models.

“There are 341 this year. That’s a dramatic increase.”

“These days, the university’s empowering messages about college’s importance and attainability also flow through the East Bay’s influential African American churches.

Super Sunday, for example, takes place every February in partnership with Cal State East Bay and faith leaders. Higher education is preached from the pulpits by pastors and college officials, including Morishita.

Acts Full Gospel Church of God in Christ has hosted Super Sunday for more than a decade in Oakland, where Bishop Robert L. Jackson said he’s a big believer in the program’s impact on his 6,000-member congregation.

“We are still trying to get the message out because a lot of the younger students believe they can be rappers and basketball stars, not realizing that rappers don’t all become famous and basketball stars can get hurt. You still need a college education,” said Jackson, a proud Cal State East Bay grad.

“We let them know they don’t have to work at Burger King and McDonald’s,” he said. “They really have an opportunity to infiltrate mainstream society and become the great people God meant them to be.”

Cal State East Bay also has been impacting the futures of the East Bay’s youngest residents.

Because research shows that children from low-income communities who begin school with poor math skills struggle to catch up, the East Bay STEM Network, founded by Cal State East Bay faculty, has invested in promoting early math education for preschool-age kids.

“In recent years, Bruce Simon, interim executive director, explained that the STEM Network launched several programs in under-resourced communities that give young students—and their parents—math confidence.

In our family engagement project, the STEM Network hosted math workshops with hands-on learning fun for parents at the Hel en Turner Children’s Center in Hayward, a state-funded preschool.

About 100 parents participated in the past two years, Simon said.

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“The workshops have driven home the point that the parents are good at math and can help their children, just like he has to believe it,” said Kristina Adams, director of Hayward Unified’s Early Learning Department, which oversees the Turner Center.

Adams said preschool math literacy rose significantly between fall and spring after the workshops last year.

Next up, the East Bay STEM Network is preparing to pilot another innovative project that brings math to laundromats in the Ashland Cherryland area of Hayward.

The network will bring math games and teaching resources, such as the “Math Starts Early” family engagement book, to parents and kids who are otherwise just waiting for spin and dry cycles to finish.

“When we work on these little innovations here, the opportunities to impact a much larger group of people through partnerships and projects grows,” Simon said.

Beyond hands-on teaching, the East Bay STEM Network (under the umbrella of The Institute for STEM Education at Cal State East Bay) is also about hands-on advocacy.

The network’s campaign to raise public awareness about early math education was honored at the East Bay Economic Development Alliance’s 2019 Innovation Awards celebration.

Morishita, who sits on the East Bay Economic Development Alliance executive committee, has been a stalwart advocate for closing the 20-month math achievement gap between low-income students of color and their more fortunate peers as they enter kindergarten.

He’s written op-eds and lobbied legislators to invest more in early math education, which called it essential for boosting the Bay Area’s future workforce.

“Early math education is an excellent investment in our future that we cannot defray,” he wrote recently.

The collective impact?

When State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond (a former assemblyman representing the parts of the East Bay) took office in 2019, he took what he learned from working closely with Cal State East Bay partners and created the Department of Education’s first STEAM Unit. He charged the branch with recruiting more teachers, especially those of color; and eliminating wide disparities in science, technology, engineering, art and math education.

From cradle to career, the university continues to nurture those long-lasting partnerships that entwine education, economic empowerment and quality of life.

Together, Cal State East Bay and its connected communities are rising.
When he was a teenager, Akeem Brown’s goal was to become an all-state football player, like many of his peers growing up in Berkeley and Oakland. It wasn’t until after he lost his university football scholarship due to legal trouble that he began to enter on a different path. At an early age, Brown’s mother encouraged him to pursue a career in politics, as he hoped to impact schools and further change.

Two years after leaving football, Brown enrolled in a community college and secured a paralegal job, and he eventually graduated with a paralegal degree in 2015 and refers to himself and his fellow mentors as educators or “enlighteners” because his mission is to help youth “reveal their light and let it shine.”

“Sometimes I’m in meetings, or doing interviews or putting out any fires that may arise. But the best part is interacting with the young people. There’s always a light about them. The work I do is a reflection of what I wish I had when I was that age.”

The Hidden Genius Project was founded in 2012 by five Black male entrepreneurs and technologists in response to the disparity between the high unemployment of young Black males and the abundance of entrepreneurship and leadership. Its ultimate goal? To spark a transformation within, and thereby, the world.

Brown’s geniuses arrive from various backgrounds, although a significant number of them come from impoverished neighborhoods, many are failing school, and some are homeless or have lost parents through violence.

“They have a lack of opportunities, it can lead to a path of destruction,” said Brown. “The Hidden Genius Project is looking to create and develop the next wave of Black male leaders who can thrive in their communities, and most importantly, build solutions to the most common problems that face their communities.”

The organization’s curriculum revolves around technology creation, entrepreneurship, and leadership. Geniuses learn a diverse set of computer programming skills, including website creation with HTML and JavaScript and back-end web languages, and many become proficient in advanced database programming.

In addition to offering technology education, Brown and his colleagues teach geniuses about college-level business topics ranging from trademarks, market analysis and patents to copyright and market projections.

“We know that it’s not just about teaching them skills, but also teaching them how to better present themselves, and cooperate as a team to lift each other up. We also want to give them the confidence to face any challenge,” Brown says.

The Hidden Genius Project has served more than 6,700 students with 310,400 hours of direct training through Intensive Immersion and Catalyst programs. This summer, the organization branched out to Catalyst programs. This summer, the organization branched out to Catalyst programs. This summer, the organization branched out to Catalyst programs. This summer, the organization branched out to Catalyst programs.

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In addition to offering technology education, Brown and his colleagues teach geniuses about college-level business topics ranging from trademarks, market analysis and patents to copyright and market projections.

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Cal State East Bay College of Science Dean Janet Singley believes all college students have what it takes to succeed. What they don’t always have is the ability to attend school, particularly in our region and beyond,“ said Kumar Malavalli. “A community created this summer called “BIPOC In STEM” provides a small community space where they can express who they are, support their interests and their struggles faced by students of color. In addition to the increased social and emotional support, Singley said the college is expanding its focus on supporting students who are new to STEM and recently introduced the STEM Lab, an expansion of the already successful Math Lab program. The collaborative programs include peer learning assistants—students who have already been successful in the program—who then take classes with the students, help lead in the classroom, and are also available outside of class for tutoring sessions and office hours.

“Both of these look to provide additional support to students who are in their first math or science class,” he said. “It has been an absolute pleasure working with the STEM Vistas … they bring youthful energy and passion to their projects [and] they are deeply committed to making higher education more equitable.”

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Looking ahead
This year, in addition to the new funding through the Malavalli gift, the College of Science is also researching best practices for providing more equitable opportunities for students. Through a program called STEM Vistas and under the guidance of Associate Dean Danika LeDuc, Michele de Coteau, STEM Lab coordinator, Alicia Still, Math Lab coordinator, interns Allison Pelland and Jon and Cara are pursuing a year research and development a program that provides support to students of color.

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WOMEN ON THE RISE

WOMEN ON THE RISE alumni events recognize successful Pioneer alumnae and provide opportunities for Pioneer women to share their inspirational career stories, discuss the unique benefits and challenges of being a woman in the workforce, and connect for support and networking. To learn more about the Women on the Rise program visit: cueeasby.edu/wor

GRACE HENKE (M.S. ’15, Statistics) is an anti-obedience dog trainer and Mensa Muftis founder. Henke went from China to earning her degree in statistics, to negotiating a 15 percent raise at a Bay Area startup to quitting a month later to start her dog training business. Henke works with dog owners who have “tried everything” but are still struggling to communicate with their shy, fearful, and reactive dogs. She also helps the owners to live a fuller life with a calmer, more relaxed and well-behaved dog.

NIAMBI CLAY (’97, Single Subject Teaching Credential) has over 25 years of experience in education leadership, including eight years as a secondary school math teacher in the San Francisco/Oakland Bay Area. As senior advisor at TEACH.org, she recently organized and moderated a panel on Black teachers’ impact and importance and the strategies and support needed to effectively increase a pipeline for Black teachers. The panel, which included former Secretary of Education John King and other esteemed panelists, attracted over 400 attendees.

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TERRI MEAD (’12, Business Administration; ’97, MBA) multi-award-winning author of Piloting Your Life, is president and co-founder of Solutions2Projects, LLC, managing partner of Class Bravo Ventures, and an advocate for women through all of her platforms, including her YouTube channel and blog. As an angel investor, Terri invests in startups that have products or services that expand women’s influence and power, including health, consumer products and technology. Terri is based in Redwood City, California, where she is also the mother of two teenagers and sometimes reluctant wife to her husband over nearly 25 years. In her spare time, Terri loves to cook, play tennis, and fly helicopters around the San Francisco Bay Area, especially under the Golden Gate Bridge.
1960s

ROBERT WILLIAMS (B.A. ’69, History) is dedicated to serving humanity alongside his wife, and Robert was in health care. After several years of active retirement before and being awarded a prestigious award for service to international diplomacy in 2020 in Versailles, Robert received an honorary doctorate of Human Letters in 2010 from an epistemic institution.

1970s

CHRISTOPHER STIER (B.A. ’72, Anthropology) became a sports journalist after college. He covered several events in California, including the bridge crossing between San Leandro and Oakland International Airport. Stier continues to be recognized for his contributions to the community. He has written about 139 books total, and is currently working on a new project.

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BILL LOYER (B.A. ’80, Multis Subject Teaching Credential) first conceived the Bay Trail like many other 20 years ago. Loyer will likely see his family move in the next few years and the 10 mile walk or bike ride across the bridge between San Leandro and Oakland International Airport. Loyer continues to be recognized for his contributions to the community. He has written about 139 books total, and is currently working on a new project.

CLASS NOTES

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John Tenuto (B.A. ’84, Political Science) earned the insurance industry in 1965 after graduating from Cal State Hayward and has been in the industry for 35 years. He has served as city manager in two California cities: San Diego in 1992. He started his brokerage in 1993, then sold it to a large national firm in 2001. In 2001, he joined the Financial Office of America in 2004, establishing their first office in California. He is now the regional president for the top performers in his industry. He helps companies from high-tech to food processors with their track and trace needs. Tenuto has four children, all in college, one who is a graduate student at Cal State East Bay.

Karen Yoder (B.S. ’96, Physical Education; M.S. ’99, Kinesiology) was hired as the new athletic director of Cal Maritime. Yoder has served as an administrator for over 15 years, including in investment fraud cases and as a liquidating trustee. She was appointed to the position of assistant to the city manager in 2016. Mr. Ramirez has over 16 years. Mr. Ramirez has over 16 years. Mr. Ramirez has over 16 years. Mr. Ramirez has over 16 years.

Erick Bill (B.S. ’97, Business Administration) worked for several Bay area accounting firms. He began teaching accounting, including as an assistant professor at Cal State East Bay. After 16 years of dedicated service as a leader and professor, Erick joined Los Patos College as a tenured accounting professor. He has been hired as an assistant professor of business administration at Ohio University. Erick has been hired as an assistant professor of business administration at Ohio University. Erick has been hired as an assistant professor of business administration at Ohio University. Erick has been hired as an assistant professor of business administration at Ohio University.

Melanie Davis (B.A. ’92, Mass Communications) returned to the University of California and completed her undergraduate degree with a major in communication and a minor in anthropology. Davis has published numerous articles in multiple academic journals on the topic of women’s empowerment. Her work has been cited in over 50 scholarly publications. She is a fellow of the Sexuality, Gender, and Identity Journal.

Greg Ramirez (B.A. ’96, Economics) was appointed as city manager, joining the City of Cameron in 2019. He began his career with the City of Malaysia in 1999 as a program assistant. Ramirez has held several positions with the city manager and city administrator. He was appointed city manager in 2004. In 2004, Ramirez was hired as the new athletic director of Cal State East Bay. Ramirez has written over 130 books, including current projects, and mostly writes about ancient Egypt. His first book was “Eye of the Pharaoh.”

SUSAN HENDERSON (1969- ’99, Anthropology) was appointed to the State Rehabilitation Council. Henderson has been executive director of the Disability Rights Education and Fund since 2003. She has multiple degrees in the field of Disability Rights Education and Fund. She has been a professor of art at Ohio State University since 1997 in 2005. She was the director of administration and managing director. She was a law firm administrator at Adams, Bowerman, Joseph and Caravato from 1993 to 1997 and law firm administrator at Kings, Willman, Mittelman and Becher from 1992 to 1993.

Chalio LAUR AJAY (B.A. ’12, Theatre and Dance) has served two years with the League of Extraordinary Gentlemen. He was appointed city manager in 2014. He has been appointed city manager in two years after his tenure with the League of Extraordinary Gentlemen.

Anthony Mattis (B.S. ’93, Business Administration) was a senior account manager for RedLine Solutions. Mattis has successfully worked in the high-tech industry as a sales representative. He has been a sales representative for over 18 years. Mattis has four children, all in college. One of his graduate students at Cal State East Bay.

Michael Costa (B.S. ’99, Anthropology & Biology) is a recruiter for Sephora. Costa has been a recruiter for Sephora for several years. Costa leads a diverse female team of marketers, creatives, writers and producers to produce social media content for Sephora (her dream company).

Ana Cecilia Quintanilla (B.A. ’16, Journalism) is a recruiter for Sephora. Costa has been a recruiter for Sephora for several years. Costa leads a diverse female team of marketers, creatives, writers and producers to produce social media content for Sephora (her dream company).

Christina Yaniko (B.A. ’16, Educational Leadership) is a recruiter for Sephora. Costa has been a recruiter for Sephora for several years. Costa leads a diverse female team of marketers, creatives, writers and producers to produce social media content for Sephora (her dream company).

Rachel Diaz (B.A. ’16, Counseling) is a recruiter for Sephora. Costa has been a recruiter for Sephora for several years. Costa leads a diverse female team of marketers, creatives, writers and producers to produce social media content for Sephora (her dream company).
SHIANN HALLINAN (B.A. ‘17) has created Exploration for Human who, like Abraham Maslow, helps people achieve their potential and inspiration by providing fresh perspectives and encouraging her audience to get involved. Hallinan has interviewed industry professionals such as Dan Peri, Timothy Hittle and Jim Rodier to share their experiences.

KORINNE NICKINGS (B.A. ‘18), Theater and Anti founded the Unity Project, which utilizes an old-school delivery method to spread awareness about Black lives worldwide. The goal is to change the understanding of Black lives for non-Black lives who might never know anything about Black people beyond social media, news and close-minded judgments. Unity can be achieved if understanding is the starting point.

JUSTIN DABIL (B.A. ’16, English) was hired as a new police officer for the Pleasanton Police Department. Dabil, a military veteran, was born and raised in Antioch and graduated from Berean Christian High School. He enlisted in the U.S. Army in 2009.

HIR PATEL (B.A. ’19, Sociology) has been working at Santa Clara Unified School District, and it is such a rewarding opportunity for him. Patel is a Business Operations and Professional Powerwashing Development Manager for expanding his skillset and network. Patel is further advancing his career in his newly minted role as graphic design specialist for Panda University College Community District.

MISHEEL MUNKHBAT (B.A. ‘20, Communication) is a Business Operations and for his support of students and his work as an advocate for racial justice in sports and beyond.

In Memoriam
Cal State East Bay Remembers Alumnus, MLB Player Joe Morgan
Cal State East Bay alumnus, Major League Baseball player and sports broadcaster Joe Morgan died in early October after a legendary life on and off the field, and more recently, supporting students at the university. He was 77.

Morgan came to then-Cal State Hayward because of a promise to his mother that she would support him playing baseball if he promised to earn a degree. That promise was fulfilled when he graduated in 1990 with a degree in physical education.

In his book, "Mr. Morgan had an illustrious career as a professional baseball player and in retirement, a career in broadcasting as a commentator," said Kinesiology Department Chair Paul Carpenter. "He was also a tireless advocate for racial justice and a great supporter of the department."

Beginning in 1963, Morgan's career included stints with the Houston Astros, Cincinnati Reds, San Francisco Giants, Philadelphia Phillies and Oakland Athletics. He later became the voice of ESPN's "Sunday Night Baseball" broadcast alongside John Miller from 1990-2010. Morgan's philanthropic partnership with the university began in 1984. Since then, 60 students have benefited from the Joe Morgan Endowed Scholarship Fund. The university recognized Morgan with a Distinguished Alumni Award in 1998 and again with an honorary doctorate in 2010.

"Like many of our students, the Joe Morgan scholarship winners' paths to college aren't always easy or unobstructed, making the aid from this award that much more significant in helping to transform students' lives," said Professor Rita Liberti.

Morgan’s legacy will live on as an inspiration by providing fresh perspectives and encouraging people to get involved.

Do you have memories of Joe Morgan you’d like to share with Cal State East Bay? Email alumni@csueastbay.edu.

For your convenience, here is the link to the online class notes submission form: csueastbay.edu/alumni.

This is where we celebrate life’s moments from fellow Pioneers with the university community. Do you have career news, accomplishments, fond memories or life changes to share? We’d love to hear from you! Submit your class note online at csueastbay.edu/alumni.

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