

Winter 2015

"I cannot sleep unless I am surrounded by books."

~Jorge Luis Borges

RAMPED

READING, ADVISING, & MENTORING PROGRAM

A TRIO STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES PROGRAM

LEARNING RESOURCE CENTER – CAL POLY POMONA

Director's Message

In the fall 2014 RAMP newsletter, I announced that Cynthia Greco accepted a position as the LRC's Bronco Tutoring coordinator. In January, Lauren Sumabat began as the newest RAMP reading advisor. Lauren is not *new* to RAMP as she was a RAMP peer tutor/mentor for two years before she graduated from Cal Poly last fall. She has transitioned superbly into her new role. You can read more about her in the following article.

We ended fall quarter with the submission of our Annual Performance Report to the U.S. Department of Education. This report measures our success in meeting three mandated objectives for the prior year. I am thrilled to report that we exceeded each of our objectives. Of the 237 students served in 2013-14, 94% **persisted** to fall 2014 and 96% remained in **good academic standing**. Of the new students served in 2009-10, 71% **graduated** within six years.

On January 30th, we submitted an application for the Department of Education TRIO Student Support Services grant competition. A successful application will provide funding for another five years (2015-2020). I thank the grant writing team who worked with me on the proposal for many hours during lunches, evenings, and weekends. I had the pleasure of working with Pedro Carrillo (Educational Talent Search), Mary Claire Gager (Pre-College Programs), and Ricardo Quintero (Pre-College Programs). I also want to thank Gently Ang (DRC), Cathy Bates (IT), Patricia Duran (ARCHES), Cynthia Greco (Bronco Tutoring), Elsa Najar (ORSP), Tracee Passeggi (DRC), Paula Sosa (DRC), and RAMP and Foundation staff who assisted in providing data and consultation, reviewing drafts of the proposal, and electronically submitting the proposal. Notification of funding should occur in early August.

In an effort to assist students in preparing a plan that will ensure that they graduate before Cal Poly converts to the semester system, RAMP has planned two modes of assistance for spring quarter. The first mode is via peer mentoring. We will offer four weeks of peer mentoring sessions titled, "Beating Semester Conversion: Planning Ahead and Managing Your Time Effectively." The second mode involves intensifying advising by hiring a part-time advisor so that all three advisors can dedicate more time to work with their students in course selection and identifying additional resources to ensure academic success.

Enjoy reading about all the exciting news and events we have the honor of sharing with RAMP participants!

New Advisor Joins RAMP Team

RAMP welcomes its first new program advisor since 2005. Like her predecessor Cindy Greco, and co-worker, Robert Matranga, she is home grown—having served as a tutor/mentor for the program since 2013.

Lauren earned a bachelor's degree in English, with an emphasis in education, from Cal Poly's EFL department in December 2014. Given her interest in helping students learn, RAMP is a natural fit. Working for the program will allow her to develop her career in student service while contemplating her plans to apply for graduate study.

As a tutor/mentor for the program, Lauren had distinguished herself, which made her a strong candidate for the position. Program staff appreciated her strong set of professional skills. As a student employee, she set an example for new tutors. She displayed professionalism, punctuality, and enthusiasm at all times. Her work with students was thoughtful, thorough, and impeccably documented.

The content of this newsletter was developed under a grant from the Department of Education. However, the contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

Reading Advising & Mentoring Program
In the LRC
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WINTER 2015 PEER TUTOR/MENTORS

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ANDREW NGUYEN
AMANDA RIGGLE
ERICA RODRIGUEZ
RAMON YANEZ
CONNIE YEH

Thus, RAMP staff is excited to have Lauren as part of the team. She will certainly bring new, effective ideas for program development and excellent service to RAMP participants.

Broadway in LA is Wicked Cool

The much-anticipated day had arrived. RAMP's off-campus event to see the Grammy and Tony award-winning musical *Wicked: The Untold Story of Oz* brought excitement and cheer among staff, tutors, and participants. Prior to the main event, dinner was served in the Bronco Student Center with Round Table pizza, soft drinks, and candy for dessert. Many participants enjoyed the opportunity to meet one another for the first time and socialize with fellow members of RAMP. For most, traveling to the Hollywood Pantages was something new and for some, seeing a musical or play was a first. As a program serving low-income and first-generation college students, RAMP's off-campus event provides exposure to diverse settings that might otherwise be unaffordable to students.

Upon arrival, participants happily received their tickets and entered the historical venue for the show. For those familiar with Frank L. Baum's *Wizard of Oz*, Playwright Winnie Holzman takes the fairytale and shines an entirely different light on the well-known story. The musical begins with the death of the Wicked Witch of the West named Elphaba and a retelling of her birth and transition to adulthood. Though the witch is commonly known for her green skin and all around wickedness, the musical portrays Elphaba's difficult upbringing and her struggles of fitting in with other college students at Shiz University. Though Elphaba is primarily known for her evil acts in *Wizard of Oz*, *Wicked* examines a different side to Elphaba and reveals her truly kind and intelligent nature. Songs like "Defying Gravity" resonated with participants because, like Elphaba, circumstances do not always dictate one's identity.

Participant Ryan Kao reflects, "We are constantly checking our title, status, and position in society and forgetting who we really are [...] we are defying gravity in life by breaking away from our comfortable

zone." Former participant, and current RAMP tutor and peer mentor, Stephanie Martinez adds, *Wicked* "conveyed the message that one makes their own fate with their freewill and that it is not up to fate or destiny whether you are successful in life." While participants surely enjoyed the theatrical experience, they also took it a step further by using the opportunity to connect, empathize, and self-examine their own lives.

At last, the drive to return to Cal Poly Pomona was spent in reflection. Participants of RAMP shared their favorite parts of the musical and discussed themes with one another. When everyone parted their own way, they left with a cognitive experience and new friendships. RAMP continues to provide opportunities for underrepresented college students to connect and integrate their experiences into their academic lives.

Professional Mentor Meeting: Reina Villanueva

A familiar face returned to speak to RAMP participants on February 12 in the Bronco Student Center. Reina Villanueva, a systems engineer for Northrup Grumman, graduated with an engineering degree from Cal Poly Pomona in 2013. She also worked for RAMP as a peer tutor/mentor while earning that degree.

Her message to the students focused on using all available resources and mentors. Doing that, she shared, helped her succeed despite encountering challenges and obstacles along the way. For example, Reina shared that coming from a low-income family and being the first to attend college meant that she was often on her own navigating college admissions, financial aid, and acclimating to the university system. She also shared that midway through getting her degree, she also had baby.

She credits the many resources, internships, and mentors she found and used with being able to graduate and secure a good job with a very reputable employer. She shared an infectious

excitement at having the opportunity to work on space programs at Northrup Grumman, encouraging the audience to find their way into opportunities that will likewise fulfill their career aspirations.

Student comments about the event reinforce the effectiveness of her talk: "It really emphasized the importance of getting involved in many different things as well as the importance of networking." Another student felt the event provided "insight" to the "struggles [of others] in situations that may or may not relate to me. It also inspires me to be and do more." Finally, another summed up the intent of the event well, saying "It's very rewarding to listen to other people's success stories and how they encourage you to do the same! Meeting someone who comes from a similar background, and who went through many obstacles, but ultimately was able to accomplish so much, greatly benefitted me." RAMP is very thankful to Reina for sharing her time and wisdom with its participants.

Tutor-Mentor Spotlight: Andrew Nguyen (pictured on the following page)

Why did you decide to apply to RAMP?

Mentoring was what really drew me to RAMP. I think an overlooked aspect of succeeding in college is being able to talk to someone who has done it before, especially if you are the first in your family to go to college. The idea of just being here seems daunting and having someone to make you accountable could make all the difference. But overall I applied because RAMP is simply amazing. They offer everything you need to succeed in school from Financial Aid to learning how to develop stronger study skills. Every school should have a program like RAMP (and no I am not being paid to say this!).

What do you like most about working for the program?

The best part about working for RAMP is the students. It's incredibly motivating to talk to students and share stories with one another. RAMP participants are some of the brightest, most friendly, and hardworking students that I've ever met.

With what other programs or organizations on campus are you involved?

One of my favorite programs at Cal Poly is the Prison Education Project (PEP). The aim of PEP is to tap into local universities and find student volunteers to help expand educational opportunities in prisons. In the fall of 2013, I became involved with PEP by working with a group of friends and classmates to teach course on Moral Philosophy at CRC Norco. We had a really special class and I've been volunteering with PEP ever since. I am also a big supporter of Californians United for a Responsible Budget. CURB is a statewide coalition that works to reduce the number of people imprisoned in jails and prisons in California. I joined CURB to get more involved with my community. I also wanted to learn about grassroots campaigns and how non-profits function.

What do you like most about being a student at Cal Poly Pomona?

That's hard; I like a lot of aspects about being a student. But I think the most memorable part of CPP would be the long conversations I had with friends after class. In talking with other students, you have the opportunity to further explore your own ideas and learn from each other. I feel like I gained more in those brief interactions than the time I spent listening to a professor talk. Plus, there are just so many interesting people in the philosophy department!

What do you think you will do after earning your bachelor's degree?

After college I'd like to travel, visit national parks, and hopefully climb Half Dome at Yosemite.

You are on a desert island, starving. You see a can of soup in the sand.

1. What kind of soup do you hope it is? I'd have a Chicken-corn chowder soup. It has the most calories and fat than any other option.

2. What kind of soup do you hope it is not? Tomato soup—there is nothing in here that will keep you alive for long.

Student Spotlight: Denise Guevara

(pictured below)

One of RAMP's friendliest and brightest participants, Denise Guevara, is a sophomore at Cal Poly Pomona with a major in Industrial Engineering. When discussing her major, she says she initially came to Cal Poly Pomona as undeclared and was unsure if she wanted to major in business or engineering. She recalls discussing her major options with her EOP peer mentor. Her mentor informed her that Industrial Engineering combined both aspects of business and engineering. She later met with the Chair of the Industrial Engineering department and "had a helpful conversation about [engineering] as a growing field for women."

Denise has been a participant with RAMP since 2013. When asked how her participation has influenced her college experience, she states, RAMP helped her "see the importance of school and how to stay on top of assignments and how to study." She also loves how RAMP is like "an academic family" by facilitating on-campus and off-campus events such as Crunch N' Munch during finals week and trips to see musicals such as *Wicked*. RAMP has also assisted her with her critical reading skills by using strategies such as reading with and against the grain to refrain from regressions. During her tutorial sessions she finds "everything really helpful" and RAMP tutors to be "welcoming and never intimidating." Her favorite thing about Cal Poly Pomona is its natural beauty and ambience. She finds the campus to have an "anything is possible" atmosphere and notes, "I never thought I could be an engineer, but with all the campus resources, it feels like I can be."

When asked about her hobbies and interests, she responds that she enjoys singing, being involved with her church, and spending time with family to gain insight, advice, and wisdom. Currently, she is learning how to play the ukulele and enjoys hiking and bicycling. On the topic of super powers, Denise remarks that she would choose the ability to fly because she would "be able to see things from a larger scale." She specifies by stating, "When I'm stressing out I can just fly up and see how small the problem actually is." She also admits that flying can be used to "just get away and enjoy the world" with a new perspective. Even without the ability to fly, Denise's perspective is refreshing and her can-do attitude sets an example for students seeking success.



Tutor/Mentor Spotlight, Andrew Nguyen

Short Shouts:

Recent RAMPer Achievements and Accomplishments

Congrats to:

Matthew Cui: Secured an internship with Steiny and Company, Inc., an electrical, construction, and consulting firm. Matthew will work in the construction consulting division.

Jesus Fimbres: New job with College of Engineering as Assistant Events Coordinator.

Elizabeth Herrera: New job as a Clerical Assistant for the LRC.

Amanda Riggle: Made the Dean's List and President's List.

Melissa Ugalde: Made the Dean's List.

Connie Yeh: Accepted to Pharm.D. program at UC San Diego.



Student Spotlight, Denise Guevara

Book Club Corner: The Road to En-Dor and the Spring Quarter Book Vote

This winter, RAMP Book Club read *The Road to En-dor* by E.H. Jones. *The Road to En-dor* details an account of two World War I prisoners of war and their escape from a camp in Turkey posing as mediums using spiritualism. In his foreword, Neil Gaiman, English author and creator of *Coraline*, *American Gods*, *Neverwhere* and *Stardust*, pronounced E.H. Jones' tale as "unforgettable" and influential. Book club members gathered together weeks 3, 5, and 7 to discuss the highly praised story.

During meetings, discussion mainly focused on the possibility of being 'hoodwinked' by the author and the extent of truth in the author's words. Book club members also discussed the relevancy of language and how it can influence one's reading experience. Finally, book club concluded with a vote for Spring Book Club. *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* by Mary Ann Schaffer and Annie Barrows was selected as the winner. Schaffer and Barrow's novel begins in 1946, just after World War II and involves correspondence between two writers from London and the island of Guernsey. Fascinated by the world of Guernsey, London writer, Juliet, travels to Guernsey to meet her correspondents and is immersed into an eccentric experience. Book Club will host its first meeting during week 3 of spring quarter.

Winter 2015 Financial Aid & Financial Literacy Workshop Series

Winter quarter saw a series of seven workshops focused on financial aid and scholarships. It was no mistake that RAMP, ARCHES, and SSEP chose to channel their financial energies in this direction: March 2 is the well-known priority deadline for submitting the FAFSA. Additionally, most of the scholarships available through Cal Poly Pomona's Bronco Scholarship Application (BSA) are due on that date.

Two FAFSA renewal workshops were offered, in weeks 3 and 7. Crystal Steele of the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships (OFAS), and Mireya Martinez, of SSEP co-presented. After running through some of the basics and common pitfalls of the process, they fielded specific questions from the audience and continued to do so even as the event ended.

A two-part workshop on applying for scholarships occurred in weeks 4 and 5. The first part, presented by Marcia Starcher and Saul Ramirez from OFAS, focused on the Bronco Scholarship Application process. The second part, presented by Lauren Sumabat of RAMP, focused on strategies for writing an effective scholarship essay, and included discussion of some excerpts from a winning essay.

In week 5, Mireya Martinez of SSEP presented on Satisfactory Academic Progress. Being aware of this policy is important for students because failing to make sufficient progress can negatively impact financial aid awards. The presentation covered requirements for satisfactory progress, consequences for failing to meet the requirements, and the appeals process for receiving continued aid despite failing to meet the requirements.

Two additional scholarships-focused workshops occurred in weeks 8 and 9; one was hosted by Mireya Martinez of SSEP and the other by Lauren. In all, there were over 40 RAMP attendees at these workshops.

LRC Corner: Ch-ch-ch-Changes

The Learning Resource Center (LRC) has undergone several changes over the last few years. In our interactions with campus staff and faculty, we have found that the campus community has not always been able to keep up with these changes. Currently, the LRC houses THREE programs on the 2nd floor of the University Library in rooms 2919 & 2921. These programs are Bronco Tutoring, RAMP, and University Writing Center. Bronco Tutoring and RAMP are a result of fairly recent name changes. Until fall 2014, RAMP was known as College Reading Skills Program (CRSP). With the beginning of the Student Success Fee (SSF), ASI Tutoring and MaSH merged together and became Bronco Tutoring. The SSF has also allowed the LRC to offer evening and online tutoring. Bronco Tutoring and UWC offer walk-in, online, and appointment options. Please visit the LRC's website (www.cpp.edu/lrc) to learn more about the services including workshops available through the LRC's three programs.

Norman J. Priest Award Recipients

RAMP is proud to congratulate two award recipients, Amanda Riggle and Christian Murillo. Each has ties to the program. Amanda has been a RAMP tutor/mentor since fall 2012, and she is also a participant of the program. Christian is a former program participant. Per Cal Poly Pomona Foundation's web site, the award goes to student employees who "embody the ideals of former Foundation Board member Norman J. Priest through their community service, leadership skills, and involvement in the Foundation."

Reflecting on the awards ceremony, Amanda recalled, "The ceremony had two great surprises—the first being Dr. Coley, the new President of Cal Poly Pomona, reading an excerpt from the essay I had submitted when applying for the scholarship and commenting that she was impressed with the accomplishments listed. The second was the giant trophy in the shape of the CLA building with my name on it." On the meaning of the award to her, she muses, "This award means I do good—good for the school, good for the students, and good for my own education."

RAMPer Joins Peace Corps

RAMP tutor/mentor Stephanie Martinez recently earned a spot in the Peace Corps. In July, she will head to Cambodia to begin her new endeavor. Heretofore, Stephanie knew little of Cambodia, its culture, and its language. Once she discovered it would be her destination, she quickly began reading about its culture and history. And she expects soon to know a whole lot more.

Stephanie applied to the program because "as a RAMP tutor, [she] found out that [she] likes tutoring and teaching English." She also wants to travel. Joining the Peace Corps will allow her to "combine both passions together." Embarking on this adventure will provide Stephanie "an opportunity to have new experiences and develop [her] teaching capability as well as promote education." She is "a very excited and at the same time a little apprehensive and scared" about the challenges of moving to a different country without knowing the language spoken there. Congratulations, Stephanie! The RAMP staff know you will do great things on this journey.

Winter Quarter Photo Gallery



RAMP Tutor, Stephanie Martinez, has been accepted for the Peace Corp and will head to Cambodia after graduation.



Rachel Dominguez with RAMP tutor/mentor, Amanda Riggle, and RAMP participant, Christian Murillo, winners of Cal Poly Pomona Foundation's 2014-15 Norman J. Priest Endowed Scholarship.



*RAMP participants pose for a picture just before departing to the Pantages Theatre to watch **Wicked** on Friday, February 6th. **Back row:** Ryan Kao, Abby Romero, Tommy Chu, Akash Vaidya, Carlos Aguilera, Helen Lowe, Melissa Ugalde, Denise Guevara, Andrew Russo, Flor Mora, Stephanie Martinez; **Front row:** Jared de la Luz, Beatriz Valencia, Kimberly Herrera, Nicole Quintero, Perry Lin, Jacqueline Mosqueda*



Former RAMP participant and tutor/mentor, Reina Villanueva, shares the story of her journey as a low-income, first-generation college student at Cal Poly to now working as a systems engineer for Northrup Gumman.