

RAMP ED

Director's Message

Congratulations to all the 2017 graduates! As we anxiously prepare for and attend luncheons, ceremonies, receptions, and celebrations, we are reminded that this time of year is bitter sweet. We are proud of the graduates but the reality is that we have to see them off. We have become accustomed to interacting with several RAMP participants, or at least seeing them regularly, and now they will begin the next phase of their lives! We wish them well!

Funding & Government Relations Update

We recently received the good news that TRIO programs will receive a funding increase for FY 2017. Several RAMP participants wrote letters to their congressional representatives urging them to continue funding TRIO and shared how their participation in RAMP has enhanced their college experience. Thank you to all who support and advocate for TRIO.

Despite the good news, the Council of Opportunity in Education's May 8th Weekly Update indicates that TRIO's 2018 funding is under threat:

The FY17 legislation represents a major victory – and all programs will see the results of this new funding in their grants for the coming program year (2017-2018). However, another battle looms on the horizon as President Trump proposed a \$92 million funding cut to TRIO for FY 2018.

Unfortunately, COE announced in its May 22nd Weekly Update that the 2018 budget is expected to be even worse than initially anticipated:

The White House is expected to release President Trump's full FY 2018 budget request this week. Based on the information in the "Skinny Budget," the full proposal is expected to include a \$142 million funding cut to TRIO in FY 2018 (program year 2018-2019).

It is evident that TRIO programs are once again under attack. We hope that we can continue to count on the community's support to advocate for TRIO so that the great work that these programs do can continue across the nation.

Spring 2017



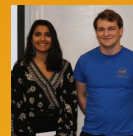
RAMP celebrates its 9th annual Graduate Recognition Luncheon

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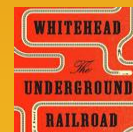
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"Books are uniquely a portable magic."

- Stephen King

RAMP 2016-17 Challenge Grant

This spring, RAMP awarded \$600 Challenge Grants to thirty participants. To be eligible to apply, participants needed be a freshman or sophomore in good academic standing and receiving a Pell grant.

Applicants were required to complete several RAMP activities before submitting an application. These activities afford students opportunities to familiarize themselves with the campus community and to enhance academic, professional, cultural, or personal growth. The activities included:

- Completing a minimum of 12 RAMP tutorial sessions
- Attending at least one financial literacy or financial aid workshop
- Attending at least one Professional Spotlight
- Attending at least one peer mentoring session
- Attending quarterly meetings with a RAMP advisor

Applicants were also required to submit an anonymous letter that addressed the following prompt: *Research the history of TRIO. Consider the information you find and your own experiences and write a letter to your congressperson explaining the benefits of TRIO to individual students and to society in general and provide the best reasons, in your opinion, for continued funding of these programs.* Some of the sentiments shared in RAMP Challenge Grant essays include:

“When I came to CPP, I felt discouraged of my potential to succeed. Luckily, I heard about RAMP and decided to seek help. Having a support system like RAMP has helped make my transition into college go smoothly, from making new friendships to improving my reading skills. I have seen drastic improvement in my English courses, and compliments in the way I have improved my writing.”

“I personally came from a disadvantaged educational background. English has always been my weakness in school. From my experience, attending RAMP once a week for two quarters, I can ecstatically say that my English literacy skills have improved. I highly recommend any of the TRIO programs offered that will support students through their journey of college.”

RAMP has awarded the Challenge Grant since Fall 2001. It was converted to a competitive scholarship format in the 2010–11 academic year. The program is excited to continue offering such a valuable opportunity to students. Congratulations to the following:

2016-17 Challenge Grant Recipients

Ciara Bell	Abbey Ibarra	Binh Phun
Kyle Breitenbach	JunLin Liang	Natalie Quintanilla
Austin Chua	Vivian Ly	Karen Segura
Xuan Duong	Cristian Martinez	Vicky Sandra Tan Li
Ana Garcia-Lima	Esteban Molina	Lydia Tremino
Marlon Gonzales	German Murillo	Milca Ramos
Natalie Hernandez	Ruth Olivares	Esmeralda Velasquez
Dalia Huerta	Bianca Onofre	Devon Woodfine
Brandon Johnson	Jessica Peralta Carrion	Sarah Yoa
Polynese Johnson	Sandra Perez-Cruz	Jia Zhen

RAMP Celebrates 9th Annual Graduate Recognition Luncheon



*Top row (L to R): Stuart Nealy, Andrew Russo, Matthew Cui, Perry Lin, & Salvador Pacheco
Middle Row: Jimena Estrada, Leslie Martinez, Michelle Alarcon, Ryan Kao, Bernardina Fuentes, Juana Martinez, & Nyla Simjee
Front row: Jerome Daguplo, Miguel Lopez, Stephanie Nieves, & Tammy Wong*

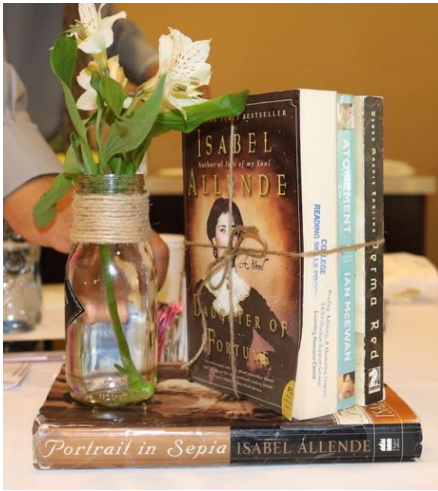
On Thursday, May 18th, RAMP celebrated its Graduate Recognition Luncheon to honor 22 graduating RAMP participants. Carol Zitzer-Comfort, former Director of RAMP (formerly College Reading Skills Program) and author of *Breaking Boundaries*, was the keynote speaker. Carol is currently an associate professor of English and Liberal Studies at CSU Long Beach. In her congratulatory speech, she highlighted the importance of staying grounded, giving back to one's supporting community, and the benefits of getting in "good trouble." She stressed the necessity of using one's voice to advocate and support programs like TRIO programs that are currently under critical review. She also took the time to debunk the myth of "pulling oneself up by the bootstraps" and how it is rare that one succeeds without the support of others.

RAMP Advisors, Dustin and Lauren introduced the graduating participants and shared a little

information about each one. Some students took the opportunity to thank RAMP and campus partners such as Educational Opportunity Program and Upward Bound. Parents, friends, mentors, and partners enjoyed witnessing their graduates receive a red cord and a certificate.



L to R: Rachel Dominguez, Dr. Frank Torres, Dr. Carol Zitzer-Comfort, Laura Ayon, & Bob Matranga



L to R: Centerpiece for GRL; Keynote speaker Dr. Carol Zitzer-Comfort; RAMP Graduate Perry Lin & RAMP Advisor Dustin Johnson

RAMP 2017 Graduate Recognition Luncheon



L to R: Dustin Johnson introduces RAMP Graduate Stuart Nealy; RAMP Graduate Alice Lu; RAMP Graduate Tammy Wong



L to R: Dustin Johnson, Laura Ayon, Bob Matranga, Cindy Greco, Stephanie Nieves, Rachel Dominguez, & Lauren Ramos



L to R: Dustin Johnson, Nyla Simjee, Laura Ayon, & Lauren Ramos

Student Spotlight:

Devon Woodfine



Devon Woodfine is a mechanical engineering major because it will allow him to go into biomedical engineering, while affording him the flexibility to explore other avenues within the engineering field. He hopes to design medical equipment for rehabilitation MRI and X-ray machines.

Devon wants to help develop devices that will help individuals with disabilities live more fulfilling lives and help detect or eradicate diseases more affordable and efficient. His family has always been a major inspiration for him. When he was young, several of his family members were sick and he wants to use his research as a way to assist people dealing with similar health issues.

Devon was recently elected senator of the CPP chapter of the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE). He helps organize and run engineering council meetings, hosts networking opportunities, and sets up career fairs with industry partners. He is also active in NSBE Reach, which exposes students from the community to engineering and college.

He is currently a student assistant with Maximizing Engineering Potential. He is a participant in EOP, RAMP, Project Success (a program dedicated to

improving graduation rates for African-American and Latino males), and McNair Prep, which helps facilitate student research with professors. He is an active member of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers.

Devon's advice to incoming freshman:

"Become active in school and your community. Do not fully commit to a program until you are absolutely sure it will benefit you. Aim for running for office and if you don't win the election, you still win because you will gain valuable experience of running for office and exposure. Get tutoring early and often. Most students go to tutoring after they get a low grade on a midterm, but that is often too late. Do not waste your summers. Summers are not to take a break but to get ahead in your classes and to position yourself for your future career through internships or related employment. Talk to all of your advisors so you are informed about research opportunities, upcoming scholarships, and any changes in academic policies that can affect you. If you fail a class, don't stress; simply rededicate yourself to succeeding and take the class again. Attending study groups, going to office hours, and having your instructors and tutors in the University Writing Center review your papers to hone your writing skills are ways you can improve your chances of success. Be sure you study your syllabi to keep abreast of important dates and assignments. Finally, don't cram and use multiple methods of studying such as online videos to supplement your class lectures."

Devon emphasized the importance of utilizing advisors. "Talking to advisors has helped me navigate the bureaucracy of the college environment. I use all of my advisors in concert and learn valuable lessons from all of them. Each advising department has their specific expertise and using all of these resources together has been a powerful tool in allowing me to be successful."

When asked what he would do differently during his first year of college, Devon responded, "I would pick different classes, study harder for longer amounts of time, and

not take as many units. I kind of overextended myself my first year. You need to figure out the maximum amount of units you can take while still maintaining optimal performance.”

Devon is known around the RAMP office for his knack for earning scholarships. When asked how other students could get scholarships he replied, “The most important thing is to just get started. Apply to as many scholarships as you can and realize that most applications have similar themes that can be tailored to fit the individual mission statements of particular organizations without too much effort. Make sure you do research on the organization before applying so that you know what the organization is looking for. I use databases to find scholarship opportunities, which narrows down scholarships to those specifically related to me, saving a tremendous amount of time. I go to the writing center, tutors, advisors, and family members to read my essays before I turn them in. When you win a scholarship, make sure you thank them with an eloquent, thoughtful letter and keep contact with them for future internship and scholarship possibilities. Also, attend required events for scholarship recipients. These events are wonderful opportunities to network with people in your field. Often times, the scholarships are offered multiple years. So attending these events can put you in a better position to get the scholarship the following year. It is also important to give advisors and faculty members ample time to complete letters of recommendation. If they have enough time, they are more likely to write better, more substantive letters.”

In the future, Devon plans to go to graduate school.

Tutor Spotlight: *Nyla Simjee*

Tutor and peer mentor, Nyla Simjee, joined RAMP this past fall quarter. She discovered RAMP from a friend and former tutor, Sarayu Ramnath. According to Nyla, Sarayu said, “RAMP is the best place to work on campus” and Nyla definitely agrees. When asked what she likes most about working for the program, Nyla

responded, “I love the environment. The tutors, participants, and staff feel like one big family.”

Though Nyla serves as a tutor and peer mentor, she also contributes to Cal Poly with her involvement in clubs and events such as student government and her recent production of the *Vagina Monologues*. While juggling school, tutoring, and campus involvement, Nyla is also interning off campus. She was recently recognized for her dedication to her tutees and RAMP as an Outstanding Tutor at the LRC’s annual Award Ceremony.

When reflecting on what she most enjoys about CPP, Nyla remarked, “The community is what has made my experience here wonderful. I have been blessed to have met wonderful friends, mentors, and professors who have helped shape me as a person and have gifted me with invaluable knowledge.” After graduation, Nyla plans to take a well-deserved break and then study holistic and alternative medicine. When asked if she could be a famous person for a day, she selects Beyoncé and adds, “a wise person once told me, ‘Always be yourself unless you can be Beyoncé, then always be Beyoncé’.”



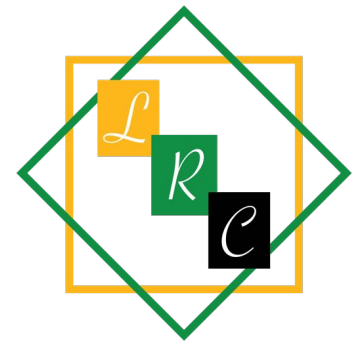
LRC Honors Student Staff with Award Ceremony



Top (L to R): Ian Stodart & Michelle Alarcon

Bottom: Dylan Sellers, Alexis Jara, Patricia Mincheff, Ethan Dalool, Mark Dietzel, Holly-Lynn Chartier, Nyla Simjee, & Wayne Page

Each spring, the Learning Resource Center hosts its annual LRC Awards Ceremony to honor outstanding student staff, tutor achievement, and graduates. This year, lunch was provided by Kellogg West and consisted of delicious cheese Tortellini al pesto, penne Bolognese, ceasar salad, and an assortment of cakes. The awards ceremony took place on Tuesday, May 23 and honored 12 outstanding student staff, 31 CRLA Level 1 certified tutors, 8 CRLA Level 2 certified tutors, and 27 graduating student staff. In order to receive CRLA 2 certification, tutors are required to undergo additional extensive tutor training and contribute to their area of tutoring. Outstanding student staff received a \$25 Bronco card, CRLA certified students were given a certificate of completion, and graduating student staff were awarded a tri-colored cord to wear during graduation.



RAMP Advisors present outstanding RAMP Tutors at LRC Awards Ceremony

(L to R): Lauren Ramos, Nyla Simjee, Wayne Page, & Dustin Johnson

Book Club Reads *The Underground Railroad*



*RAMP Book Club Members engage in thoughtful discussion of Colson Whitehead's *The Underground Railroad* (From bottom L to R): Lauren Ramos, Amanda Rigggle, Jose Salcedo, Dustin Johnson, Alfredo Raygoza, Rudy Alvarez, & Tammy Wong*

The Underground Railroad by Colson Whitehead follows the main character, Cora, on her journey from slavery to freedom on the fictionalized rails of the Underground Railroad. The author uses an escape narrative to highlight the web of characters that undergirded the institution of slavery: the slave master, the overseer, the abolitionist, the escaped slave, and the conductors. Many book club members were shocked at the personalized depictions of slavery written through the eyes of the female protagonist, Cora. Unlike learning about slavery in a history book, *The Underground Railroad* uses the literary form of the novel to evoke the brutal emotions and constant stress of being a black woman under the arbitrary authority of the plantation system. The author is able to reveal slavery and the absconding from slavery, in all of the emotional and fearful clarity that many history books lack. Whitehead unveils the crux of the horror of slave life—the death of slaves as social beings and their utter inability to control even the smallest aspects of their daily lives. They could not control who they married, the extent to which they used their labor, or even the safety of their children. Most disturbingly, the book depicts how female slaves did not even have control of their own bodies in terms of whom they could love or reproduce with. The despotic control of the slave master extended to a total domination of female slaves' bodies. The female slave was subjected to the harsh labor like other slaves, but with the added burden of being perpetually haunted by the specter of rape.

The fever created by the Fugitive Slave Law (a law that made it legal to hunt escaped slaves in the north and recapture them) created a cruel incentive to not only capture escaped slaves, but for slave catchers to capture *free* blacks and sell them into slavery in the deep-south. The author details the perverse economic incentive that was created by escaped slaves and the system created to catch them, birthing an entire slave-catching industry in the United States. Whitehead is also adept at making the historical links between the slave system and the economic foundations of the United States glaringly apparent. He details the ripple effect that the slave system had on the overall economy. The slave ships and plantation crops had to be insured by insurance companies. (Many U.S. companies such as AETNA were instrumental in insuring the institution of slavery.) The iron used to imprison slaves necessitated an immense need for iron. Slave labor was influential in making wild lands conducive to industry by clearing fields, building roads and bridges, and hollowing out mines. Moreover, the reliance on unpaid labor allowed U.S. companies to accumulate the necessary capital to build up companies and eventually industrialize. Whitehead describes the impact that the invention of the cotton gin had on the expansion of slavery. He details how this device vastly increased the production of cotton and triggered an exponential rise in slave catchers, overseers, and a multitude of inventions needed

to facilitate the production and transportation of massive amounts of cotton. It is therefore not surprising that the engine of the textile industry in America and in Europe bore the indelible imprint of cotton and slave labor.

Although the story takes place almost 200 years in the past, Whitehead ensures that readers do not experience the text in a historical vacuum. He couches the Fugitive Slave Law in the context of policing black bodies, pushing the reader to make connections between the roaming hoards of slave catchers during slavery and the vast numbers of African Americans currently under control of the penal system. After all, as one of our book club members Nyla Simjee pointed out, “the thirteenth amendment outlawed slavery except if one was convicted of a crime.” Many theorists, such as Michelle Alexander in her book, *The New Jim Crow*, argue that the slave system simply receded into the criminal justice system. They describe how the conflation of *black image* with the image of the *criminal* had its origins in the racist depictions of African Americans during slavery, and its offspring of institutional racism in the Jim Crow era after slavery.

Ultimately, Whitehead’s depiction of the Underground Railroad forces us to come to grips with the horrendous character of black chattel slavery in the United States. However, the novel also compels its readers to refrain from viewing slavery through a Manichean lens of good vs. evil. Readers are reminded about the heroic exploits of white men and women who risked their reputations and lives to undermine America’s peculiar institution. We also learn that many blacks acted as turncoats, exchanging black runaways for an elevated stature on the plantation. We see in *The Underground Railroad*, the faint beginnings of multi-racial, multi-class progressive movements that came to full fruition during the Civil Rights Movement. This novel is an exercise in what history should strive to be--truthful, even if it muddles up our sense of ideological purity, and at times shocks us or hurts our feelings, it is truthful nonetheless.

In the fall, Book Club will be reading *The Handmaid’s Tale* by Margaret Atwood.

Dawn Van Bruggen Memorial Scholarship



*Dawn Van Bruggen Memorial Scholarship recipients
Giao (Selena) Bui & Esmeralda Velasquez*

The Dawn Van Bruggen Memorial Scholarship is offered through the Learning Resource Center to two recipients each year. The Scholarship was established in 2000 to honor former LRC tutor, Dawn, who had provided service to Cal Poly in various forms. Dawn passed away in 1999 and was well regarded by many on campus, including the Children’s Center, Commencement, and the LRC.

Students who have received tutoring or who tutored in the LRC during the 2016-17 year are eligible to apply for the scholarship. The deserving recipient would have qualities similar to Dawn such as being helpful, friendly, goal oriented, hardworking, and dependable. The recipient would also demonstrate perseverance through adversity and provide university or community service.

The 2017 recipients, RAMP tutee, Esmeralda Velasquez, and Bronco Tutoring tutor, Giao (Selena) Bui, were honored at a luncheon at Kellogg West on May 30. The recipients were. At the luncheon, attended by Dawn’s parents and step-parents, Esmeralda and Selena shared their gratitude for being recognized in honor of Dawn and receiving the \$250 scholarship.

Financial Aid & Academic Success Workshops

Bring It On: Test Taking Skills & Strategies	4/18	During week 5, EOP advisor Mireya Martinez helped students navigate the intricacies of financial aid as it relates to satisfactory academic progress in the workshop, <i>How to Keep Your Financial Aid</i> . Students were informed how to locate their financial aid advisors on the financial aid website, how to calculate their grade point balance to see if they meet satisfactory academic progress, and the appeal process for reinstating their financial aid due to low academic performance.
Stress Management	4/20	
Exploring Scholarships	4/25	
How to Keep Your Financial Aid	4/27	
Preparing Now for Your Future Career	5/2	
Finding Your Motivation	5/9	
Credit & Debt	5/16	

Also during week 5, Dalia Garcia and Lou Yang from the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships discussed various strategies to increase the likelihood of being awarded scholarships. In *Exploring Scholarships*, actual scholarship essays were analyzed to give students examples of essays that were exceptional, as well as essays that were ineffective in persuading readers.

During week 6, Joy Tafarella from the Cal Poly Credit Union presented a workshop called *Credit and Debt*. Students learned the importance of maintaining high credit scores. Joy reviewed all of the factors that go into computing your FICO score as well as strategies to increase credit scores.

RAMP also partnered with the Disability Resource Center, Counseling Services, and ARCHES for academic/career workshops exploring study skills, career development, and ways to decrease stress and increase motivation. Dr. Gently Ang from the DRC presented *Bring It On: Test Taking Skills and Strategies* in which she examined the neuroscience behind memory and imparted study skills based on how the brain best assimilates information. Christine M. Ricohermoso-Shiaw from Counseling Services offered students strategies of mindfulness and relaxation to cope with the stress of academic life in her workshop, *Stress Management*. Shiaw also presented a workshop titled *Finding Your Motivation* specifically designed for students who struggle with decreased motivation. She reviewed symptoms of depression and anxiety as causes of decreased motivation as well as strategies to grapple with these issues. In the workshop, *Preparing Now for Your Future Career*, RAMP Director Laura Ayon, and ARCHES Director Patricia Duran-Quezada, imparted strategies that would make students more marketable to future employers.

Spring 2017 RAMP Tutors/Peer

Rutilio Alvarez	Wayne Page
Sarah DeAgüero	Alfredo Raygoza
Alice Lu	Nyla Simjee
Jasmine Martinez	Tammy Wong

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CAL POLY POMONA

CONTACT US

Library, Room 2919
(909) 869-4349
ramp@cpp.edu
www.cpp.edu/ramp

RAMP STAFF

Laura E. Ayon, Director, lemunoz@cpp.edu
Rachel P. Dominguez, Admin Asst, rpdominguez@cpp.edu
Dustin S. Johnson, Advisor, dsjohnson@cpp.edu
Lauren S. Ramos, Advisor, lsumabat@cpp.edu



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