

Fall 2015

"You don't have to burn books to destroy a culture. Just get people to stop reading them."

~Ray Bradbury



READING, ADVISING, & MENTORING PROGRAM

A TRIO STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES PROGRAM

LEARNING RESOURCE CENTER – CAL POLY POMONA

Director's message

The Reading, Advising, & Mentoring Program (RAMP) was notified in July that we were awarded a five-year TRIO Student Support Services continuation grant from the U.S. Department of Education in the amount of \$1.86 million. RAMP serves 250 low-income, first-generation college students, and students with disabilities with the purpose of assisting in their retention and graduation from Cal Poly Pomona.

We returned to campus on September 1st with an expected staff change. Robert Matranga resigned from the program after 13 years of service. He is now employed with a law firm as a lawyer. Dustin Johnson has transitioned into Robert's position as a full-time advisor.

We recently submitted our 2014-15 Annual Performance Report to the U.S. Department of Education and have exceeded our three objectives set forth by the Department. The three objectives are that 80% of students served will persist to the following fall; 85% will remain in good academic standing; and 55% of 2009-10 new students will graduate within six years of entering the program. The following are the 2014-15 results for each of the objectives:

Persistence: 96% of the 250 students served in 2014-15 persisted to fall 2015

Good Academic Standing: 97% of the 250 students served in 2014-15 were in good academic standing at the end of the year

Bachelor's Degree Attainment: 85% of the 130 new students served in 2009-10 have attained their bachelor's degree at Cal Poly.

On behalf of the RAMP staff, Happy Holidays!

Fall Recruitment

Fall recruitment consisted of a welcome back event to reconnect with our returning students; an orientation event to thoroughly inform non-participants about RAMP; presentations in English classes to briefly inform students of RAMP services; and a new event, TRIO Connection, to welcome students who participated in a Cal Poly TRIO program while in high school including Educational Talent Search, Upward Bound, and Upward Bound Math Science.

On Thursday, September 24, 11:30 am–2 pm, RAMP welcomed back over 20 returning participants. Students were greeted by new and returning tutors and offered some light snacks. They also had the opportunity to meet with their advisor and conduct program business such as completing an annual update form and submitting their request for reading tutoring.

The RAMP Orientation for new applicants took place on Friday, September 25, 9–11:30 am. Orientation began with a short informational session followed by students visiting four stations, which included applying for the program, receiving the program manual and participant contract, reviewing the course syllabus (if the student was considering enrolling in our 1-unit reading course), reviewing the RAMP Challenge Grant application (if the student was a freshman or sophomore receiving a Pell Grant), and a final station to review other useful information such as enrolling in the RAMP text alert program. Over 75 students attended.

During U-hour on October 6, the TRIO Pre-College and RAMP staff met with students who graduated from one of the Cal Poly Pre-College programs. A short program was followed by an opportunity to

Reading Advising & Mentoring Program In the LRC Library Rm. 2919

STAFF

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

RACHEL DOMINGUEZ
RPDOMINGUEZ

DIRECTOR

LAURA AYON
LEMUNOZ

PROGRAM ADVISORS

LAUREN SUMABAT
LNSUMABAT

DUSTIN JOHNSON
DSJOHNSON

www.cpp.edu/ramp
ramp@cpp.edu
(909) 869-4349

FALL 2015 PEER TUTOR/MENTORS

ANNE ISIDRO
ERICA RODRIGUEZ
JASMINE MARTINEZ
MICHAEL THOMPSON
OSCAR RIOS
RACHEL WALKER
RAMON YANEZ
SARAYU RAMNATH
TAMMY WONG
WAYNE PAGE

apply for RAMP. Pizza was provided to those in attendance.

RAMP Tutors conducted at least 18 presentations in English classes during the first couple weeks of the quarter. While these presentations are brief, several students apply for the program as a result of hearing one of the presentations.

RAMP worked with about 200 new and continuing participants this quarter with 125 receiving reading tutoring.

Transition Student Panel

RAMP services address several non-cognitive factors including academic behaviors, sense of belonging, self-doubt and perception, perseverance, social and emotional skills, and approaches toward learning strategies. In an effort to further address developing non-cognitive skills, RAMP introduced a Transition Student Panel this fall. At the Transition Student Panel on October 13, about 10 students listened to juniors and seniors share how their background influenced their transition to college and how they navigated around obstacles.

The panel was based on a study that strived “to provide a framework to help students understand how their backgrounds matter” (Stephens 2). It is our hope that the panel intervention helped the participants realize that their backgrounds do indeed matter and may affect their college experience and readiness. According to the research, when first-generation college students understand how their background can influence their achievement in college, they will be more likely to seek out various campus support resources and narrow the “achievement gap” between themselves and non-first-generation students.

Students who attended the panel presentation completed a short questionnaire where they identified two lessons they learned from the panelists, specified how they will apply the information they learned, and indicated which of the panelists they most identified with and why. Their responses were compiled and shared with the panelists so that they might understand how sharing their story could impact those transitioning

into college. In spring quarter, the attendees responses will be sent back to them and they will be asked to reflect on them and prepare a letter to next year’s incoming students.

College Night at the Getty Villa

In a collaborative effort, RAMP, ARCHES, and McNair Scholars chartered a bus to visit the beautiful Getty Villa museum in Malibu. The goal of the trip was to expose participants to one of the most unique and awe-inspiring artistic treasures in southern California. The Getty Villa, a smaller, more intimate sister museum to the Getty in west Los Angeles, houses 7,000 years of Greek and Roman art from the end of the Stone Age to the fall of the Roman Empire. The aesthetic space of the Getty Villa transports museum-goers back to the times of Ancient Roman aristocracy with its beautiful marble floors, incredible mosaics on the walls and ceilings, as well as luxurious courtyards adorned with meandering pathways, trickling fountains, and plants inspired by those grown in ancient Roman households. Upon entering the museum, one is greeted by a spectacular 450-seat amphitheater based on classic ancient designs. The exhibitions were arranged by themes: Gods and Goddesses, Dionysus and the Theater, Ancient Athletes in the Competition Room, Stories of the Trojan War, as well as countless monumental sculptures from everyday-life in ancient Rome and Greece.

College Night at the Getty Villa, breaks from the traditional stuffiness of most museum settings by offering fun activities such as: creating your own olive branch head wreath, ancient Greek and Roman Jeopardy, a live DJ and dancing in the center courtyard, and wonderful dining in a spectacular architectural setting. According to RAMP participant Peter Muhumuza, “The event was extremely educative because I have a deep interest in Greek History and art. Also, the music in the museum made the environment enjoyable and vibrant. Thanks to RAMP for organizing this great event! I am looking forward to more events like this in the future.” The trip provided a wonderful opportunity for

the members of RAMP, ARCHES, and McNair Scholars to socialize in a non-academic environment. Apparently, it worked, because by the end of the night, it was a struggle to get people to leave, as they were deeply engaged in a Toga-style dance party in the center of the museum.

Financial Literacy Series

This year RAMP, ARCHES, and EOP continued their collaborative efforts offering several workshops intended to increase participants' knowledge about filing and renewing FAFSAs and to improve overall financial literacy of students. Mireya Martinez started off our workshop series with *Making Cents of Your Financial Aid Award*. In this workshop, students were informed about the different types assistance offered through financial aid including: Pell Grant, Cal Grants A and B, the State University Grant, as well as the difference between subsidized and unsubsidized loans. Students also learned how to interpret their account summary page on Bronco Direct. In the second part of our FAFSA series titled *FAFSA Renewal*, participants learned how making simple mistakes on your FAFSA could lead to a delay in receiving your aid. Moreover, filling out the FAFSA as early as January 1st can help to ensure that you get the full amount of aid you are entitled to. If students do not have access to tax information by January 1st, they can provide estimates until their official tax information becomes available. The presenters Crystal Steele and Mireya Martinez also highlighted upcoming changes to the FAFSA; including the new requirement to create a FSA ID

and password and the upcoming change in FAFSA due date coming in 2017. Mireya explained that financial aid might be revoked if students do not satisfy Satisfactory Academic Progress by passing and completing 80% of their units per quarter, as well as keeping their GPA above a 2.0.

The fall quarter also featured several workshops designed to increase the financial literacy of its participants. In *Savings and Online Budgeting Tools* presented by Joy Tafarella of the CPP Credit Union, students learned the importance of acquiring skills such as developing a spending plan, tracking your spending over a period of time, and paying your savings account before you pay any other bills. Attendees were also made aware of the many incredible online tools to make budgeting and saving efficient and easy. In our workshop *Credit and Debt*, students learned of the importance of maintaining a high credit score and ways to improve and sustain their score. The workshop stressed the difference between good and bad debt, the importance of paying down debt, and establishing credit early in life. In *Exploring Scholarships*, students were made aware the private as well as public sources of scholarship funding and how to successfully apply for scholarships. In the workshop, *Covered California Renewal*, the presenters explained the process of enrolling in, and renewing a health care plan under Covered California, the state's health care exchange. Dr. Eric McLaughlin presented a workshop on considering retirement entitled, *Funding Your Future*. Dr. McLaughlin explained the importance of beginning an Individual Retirement Account as soon as students can, particularly when they begin full-time employment.

Professional Spotlight

by Sara Ramnath (RAMP tutor/peer mentor)

On Tuesday, November 3rd during U-Hour, RAMP hosted its quarterly Professional Spotlight. The event, which takes place only once during the fall and winter quarter, taps a professional to give a presentation to students explaining their postgraduate life and the process they encountered to arrive at their career. This quarter, we had the pleasure of having Cynthia Greco, the Bronco Tutoring Coordinator, speak for us. Cynthia's story started from her upbringing, discussing the jobs and dynamics of her family and how it influenced her settings and goals for her future. Over the course of several years, she encountered many life obstacles that had her defer from her education. However, getting her degree was always an ultimate goal which she not only accomplished but excelled at, even obtaining a master's degree in the process. Cynthia's genuine and frank conversation about her life really reached to the students. It is common for many college students to experience life epiphanies, when they realize that what they are studying is not for them, or if familial obligations require them to take a step back from their academics. What isn't very common is for an established adult with a professional career to tell them that it is okay when that happens, and in fact it happens all the time. Cynthia's presentation was a comforting reassurance that obstacles are only temporary, but with patience and a willingness to deviate from the original path, new opportunities are always available.

Book Club: The Book Thief by Markus Zusak

This fall, the RAMP Book Club read, *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak. *The Book Thief* tells the heartfelt, and often heart-breaking story of one German family who attempts to defy the crushing conformity of Nazi Party during World War II. The Nazi Party, engaged in a massive campaign of cultural cleansing, attempts to wipe out all vestiges culture and ideas antithetical to Nazi ideology by burning books. Liesel, the book's heroine, defies the party, her country and her peers, by reveling in the beauty and power of knowledge, rescuing books from their fiery demise through her small, but revolutionary act of book thievery.

Book club participants grappled with ideas of conformity and knowledge in their relation to power and Fascism. Many students wondered how such seemingly "normal" people, in times of war and economic peril, could become absolutely fanatic in their following of a leader and his narrow, dogmatic beliefs. Many were also inspired by the indomitable spirit of resistance that one young girl showed in the face of such cruel and absolute tyranny. In its third and final meeting, the RAMP Book Club voted for the upcoming book for the Winter Book Club. *The Man in the High Castle*, by Phillip K. Dick was selected. It is an exploration of an alternative history of the United States. It explores the possibility of life in America if the Axis powers had actually won World War II and annexed the United States as one of its Fascist colonies. In this version of history, slavery is still legal and people of Jewish descent are forced to live underground to survive. The Winter Book Club will hold its first meeting during week 3 of the Winter Quarter.

Tutor Spotlight: Wayne Page

In fall 2014, Wayne joined RAMP as a participant and quickly impressed RAMP staff with his academic excellence and exceptional reading skills. It is no surprise that he was hired as a tutor/peer mentor in fall 2015. When asked why he applied to RAMP, he responds, "I loved being a RAMP participant and have always had a passion for helping others." Reflecting on his RAMP participation, Wayne enjoyed the interaction and environment with tutors where he received feedback and guidance. Most of all, he enjoys getting to know his tutees and remarks, "When I get to know a tutee I feel as if I am building a lasting friendship with them that extends beyond RAMP." He appreciates the ability to interact with students on a personal level and help them advance further in life.

In the second year of his undergraduate degree in Aerospace Engineering, Wayne is involved in a number of organizations and projects on campus. To name a few, he is involved with UMBRA (Undergraduate Missiles, Ballistics, and Rocketry Association) and AIAA (American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics). Currently, he is involved in a research project to optimize and design a Solar Sail implemented on a CubeSat to reduce the cost of interplanetary space travel. Another project Wayne is involved in is a pod design to enter in the Hyperloop Competition hosted by SpaceX. All of Wayne's participation and project involvement is paving the way to his desire to work in the aerospace industry where he can work in the advanced materials field, orbital mechanics, and/or assist with different space missions. Eventually, Wayne would like to start his own company focused on innovative design and technology or vehicles such as spacecraft, aircraft, or super cars. In addition to all of Wayne's notable campus involvement, he also works as an LRC Front Desk assistant.

When asked what he likes most about being a CPP student, he notes that he enjoys the ability to participate in a multitude of faculty-supported projects. Students "are able to start a project with ease and can really choose the pace of each individual project," Wayne states. Further, Wayne appreciates faculty that are open to answer questions and give advice to students. Aside from Wayne's balancing act of school, campus involvement, and two campus jobs, Wayne also makes wise food choices. When asked which type of food he would choose to eat for an entire quarter, he selects "tropical fruit because they have such vibrant tastes and are filled with nutrients." A sound choice, Wayne.

Student Spotlight: Perry Lin

Perry Lin is a junior at CPP pursuing his undergraduate degree in Biology. He was a panelist at RAMP's First-Year Transition Student Panel, where he shared his knowledge and experience transitioning from high school into college. When asked about his major selection he states, "I knew I wanted to do something in the science field, but was not really sure what I wanted. I thought General Biology would give me the broadest range of choices and let me experience different science fields." One of Perry's favorite things about CPP is that he is

able to witness other students strive towards the same goal as him, which brings him closer to other students. Perry also participates in CPP's Habitat for Humanity Club and reflects, "It lets me reach out to my community and reminds me that even though my situation seems bad, there are families out there that need more help." Volunteering allows Perry to "free his mind" and physically build something.

As a RAMP participant since 2013, Perry notes that his college experience "changed dramatically" after he got involved with the program. "The advisors, staff, and tutors of RAMP made me more comfortable at school, knowing that I can get additional help if I really needed it," states Perry. He further explains, "Since I did not dorm at school freshmen year, I did not have a lot friends that I would run into at school. So when I am feeling a little depressed because of a bad test score or just overloaded with assignments, RAMP is the place I go for help. Even if it's just a little talk with Rachel Dominguez, it really will make a difference emotionally." Perry is often found in the tutoring lab studying, yet he admits, "I am the type of person that cannot continuously sit for long periods of time." Some of his hobbies and interests include hiking, mountain biking, and even cliff diving. He states, "I just love staying active and seeking activities that will get my adrenaline pumping." He also notes that said outdoor activities also work as a stress reliever for him, when he has a large amount of assignments.

Finally, when asked what advice he would give himself when he was a college freshman, he responds, "Procrastination is your worst enemy" and continues, "Do not be afraid to make mistakes. Ask a question during class and it is okay to get it wrong and maybe have some classmates laugh at you. It is better to get it wrong during class then to get it wrong on your midterm and/or final exam." Lastly, he adds, "If you see something you like, for example an internship or volunteer program, do not be afraid to apply for it because even if you do not get selected, you still learn something."

Fall 2015 Photo Gallery



Tutor/Mentor Spotlight, Wayne Page



Student Spotlight, Perry Lin



RAMP Tutors/Peer Mentors: (From left) Erica Rodriguez, Anne Isidro, Rachel Walker (Center), Sarayu Ramnath, & Michael Thompson



RAMP Participants Marina Sanchez (left) & Xochitl Robles-Villaseñor (right) were sponsored by Staff Council to participate in Matt's Run



Congratulations, Xochitl!
1st place in her age group at
Matt's Run



College Night @ the Getty Villa! From left: Amanda Riggle, Tammy Wong, Peter Muhumuza, Lauren Sumabat, Trinh, Jerome Daguplo



Top row (from left): Jessica Coronado-Meza, Mirtha Lopez, Youssef Nasry, Jerome Daguplo, Carlos Garcia-Carrera, Peter Muhumuza. Bottom row (from left): Ruth Olivares, Binh Phun, Ciara Bell, Denise Guevara, Lauren Sumabat, Ruby Solis, Renato Perez-Ramirez

Thank you Foundation!



Above: Sarayu Ramnath and Anne Isidro enjoying light snacks and refreshments provided by CPP Foundation during RAMP's Crunch N' Munch