

RAMP ED

Director's Message

Happy Fall! As we were made aware of during Fall Conference, this is the last fall quarter for Cal Poly as we prepare to transition to the semester system. RAMP advisors have attended several workshops pertaining to semester conversion. They and the tutors have been diligently helping students prepare for the conversion during advising and peer mentoring sessions. For guidance and tools, visit the semester conversion website!



On another note, we congratulate RAMP advisor, Lauren Ramos and her husband, Christopher on the birth of their beautiful baby girl, Shirley Carmen! Shirley was born on June 28th.

RAMP was fortunate to have Jasmine Martinez fill in for Lauren during fall quarter. Jasmine has served as a RAMP tutor for four years and is currently a graduate student at Cal Poly. Jasmine will return to her tutoring position winter quarter. Thank you to Jasmine for her dedication to providing excellent advising to RAMP participants in Lauren's absence!



Left to right:
Newborn Shirley
Shirley visits
RAMP on
September 15!
Shirley at 3 ½
months.

Fall 2017



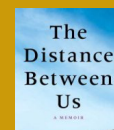
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*"If you're going to get anywhere in life, you have
to read a lot of books."*

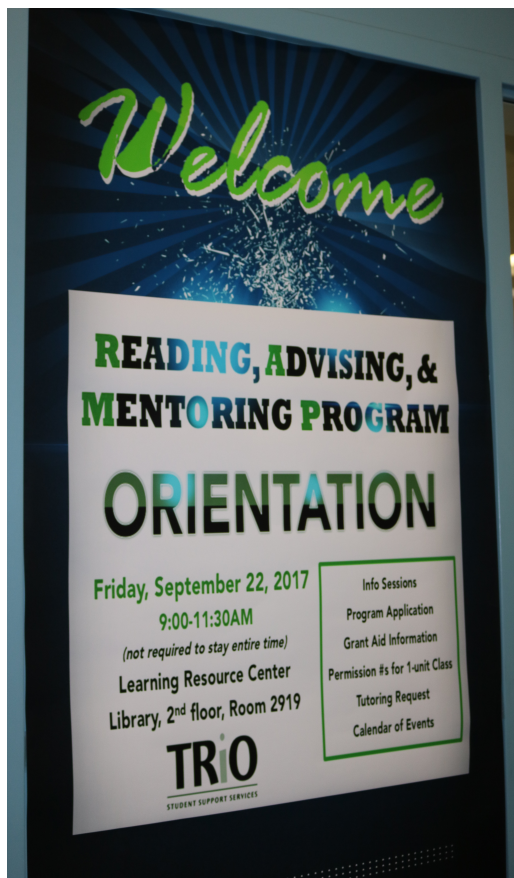
- Roald Dahl

RAMP Fall Orientation

On Friday, September 22, 2017, RAMP had its annual Fall Orientation with over 65 CPP students in attendance. Fall Orientation gives students the opportunity to acquire more information about RAMP and its services before applying for the program. Students first attended a short informational session before moving on to the first station, which was a brief review of the program's manual and participant contract. At the following stations, students received a folder full of resources including RAMP's fall calendar of events; reviewed the RAMP Challenge Grant application (for participating Freshman and Sophomore students receiving the Pell grant); and the 1-Unit LRC reading course syllabus (an optional enrollment course). The last station allowed students to review the program application and ask a staff member any questions regarding it.

Thanks to a generous donation from the Office of Student Success, RAMP held a raffle for students participating in this year's Fall Orientation. OSS donated four copies of Reyna Grande's memoir, *The Distance Between Us*, which is the 2017-18 First Year Experience's Common Read. The winners of the raffle were Athena Gougoulas, Erin Sewell, Frances Scruggs, and Matilde Olarte Espinoza.

We would also like to thank our campus partners, Office of Financial Aid & Scholarships and Student Support & Equity Programs for helping to spread the news about RAMP's Fall Orientation. Thank you also to the Learning Resource Center for their support and use of space on the day of the event!



RAMP Tutors: Rudy Alvarez, Milca Ramos, Jasmine Martinez, Wayne Page, Karen Segura, Alfredo Raygoza, Luna Armas, & Abbey Ibarra



RAMP Tutor, Cheyenne Romero explains the RAMP Challenge Grant



Professional Spotlight: Dr. Cynthia Gonzalez

RAMP Fall Professional Spotlight's honored speaker was Dr. Cynthia Gonzalez from Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science. Dr. Gonzalez received her undergraduate degree from UCLA in Chicano/a Studies and Public Health. She received her Master of Public Health at the University of Southern California and her Doctorate in Anthropology from California Institute of Integral Studies. She uses her unique educational background in the fields of anthropology, medicine, ethnic studies, history, and public health to conduct interdisciplinary participatory research to improve health outcomes and reduce health disparities in her home community of Watts.

Early in her presentation, Dr. Gonzalez described the difference in perception when she introduces herself as Dr. as opposed to Cynthia Gonzalez from Watts. People tend to take her more serious and treat her with a higher degree of respect when they are presented with her academic accolades. Dr. Gonzalez shared that her coming into the health field as a fortunate accident. She attended the charter school ran by Charles Drew University, which allowed her to begin conducting research. This experience opened her eyes to the incredibly poor health outcomes of people that lived in the Watts area including the differences in life span and rate of chronic diseases between Watts and other parts of Los Angeles.

Although she grew up in the economically depressed area of Watts, Dr. Gonzalez never felt as if she was deprived. Her father supported the family as a gardener and her mother as homemaker. Her hardworking family always provided her basic needs while stressing education as a means of advancement. However, when she began studying public health, she realized that her parents providing basic needs still left her far behind her more affluent peers in terms of the safety of her neighborhood, access to quality education, and access to affordable and high-quality health care. These glaring inequities drove her to explore the difference between

equity and equality. She displayed an image of three people with varying heights attempting to view a baseball game over a fence. Dr. Gonzalez then opened up the floor to discussion of these images, and sparked a lively conversation on the difference between equality and equity. According to Dr. Gonzalez, using the philosophy of equality, everyone was given an equal sized box to raise them an equal amount in order to see the game. However, even though each person was given equal accommodation, only the taller individuals were able to see the game. In a separate image that conveyed equity, each person was given the necessary size box to actually see over the fence. For her, the image of equity reflects the needs of her particular community more accurately than the equality model of health care. According to Dr. Gonzalez, the people in Watts do not need the same access to health care, they actually need more services than affluent areas because their needs are far greater.

In her presentation, Dr. Gonzalez also described the African concept/symbol of Sankofa from Ghana as a principle that guides her methodology. The Akan people believed that learning from the wisdom of the past ensures a strong future. According to Dr. Gonzalez, our past determines our current health outcomes. Although genetics plays a large role in determining health outcomes, around 40% of that which determines health outcomes derive from our historical positioning in the world—where we were born, the environmental condition of our neighborhoods, access to quality food, our race, gender, and socioeconomic status. As a result, Dr. Gonzalez conducts research immersed in the historical and sociological milieu of the community to come up with a clearer picture of the strengths and needs of that neighborhood. Before conducting research in Watts, she explored the historical background of the area, which has long been mired in poverty and racial strife. The area erupted in a violent uprising in the 1960's and the factors that contributed to the uprising were a lack of

employment, poor education, and debilitating poverty. In an effort to see whether or not her community changed since the 1960s, she trained a group of people from Watts to conduct research on their own community. The findings of their research were quite shocking. She describes how her work maps out the health services provided in Watts. According to her research, Watts has the lowest number of health clinics and lowest amount of insurance coverage in the Los Angeles area. She explained that the area severely lacked health clinics, medical professionals, and hospitals to adequately serve the community. Although the demographics of the area shifted from a majority African-American community to a majority Latino community, the same issues were found to plague the Watts area now as in the 1960's. Her research determined the structural impediments that left Watts out of the increasing prosperity shown in other parts of Los Angeles and the need to help shape public policy to increase awareness and resources for the community. Consequently, she began to share her research findings with local politicians and community organizations in order to influence policy decisions.

As opposed to viewing her community through the deficits of immense poverty and lack of quality education, Dr. Gonzalez chooses to see the remarkable beauty in the culture and people of her community. Where she sees dedicated working class families attempting to better themselves despite being mired in poverty, others view Watts as a bastion of high crime rates, high school dropouts, and rampant gang violence. In her work, she dedicates herself to improving the negative perceptions that many have of her community.

In conjunction with sharing her story and research, Dr. Gonzalez encouraged the students in attendance to take their education seriously because it is their duty to improve the lot of first-generation students that come after them. Moreover, she stressed the importance of students pursuing graduate studies as a means of promoting analysis of the specific needs of poorer communities that are often neglected in many realms of academic research.



Dr. Cynthia Gonzalez speaking with RAMP students at the Professional Spotlight

RAMP Tutors and Participants after Professional Spotlight. (left to right): Alfredo Raygoza, Wayne Page, Gloria Vanegas, Milca Ramos, Kevin Jimenez, Rudy Alvarez, & Jasmine Martinez



Student Profile: *Ciara Bell*



Ciara Bell has been a RAMP participant since fall 2015. She is majoring in Apparel Merchandizing and Management (AMM), which is the perfect major for her because she has been interested in fashion from an early age. The major not only allows her to be creative, but also to learn about fashion from a business standpoint. She views AMM as an amazing experience that allows her to experience the best of both worlds. Ciara is currently the treasurer of the campus club, The Fashion Society, which serves as a “fashion hub” and is open to students from any major who are interested in the fashion industry and want to learn more about it. Outside of fashion, Ciara has a wide variety of artistic interests including drawing, writing, painting, and reading (of course).

Ciara’s favorite thing about Cal Poly Pomona is its “Learn by Doing” motto. She witnesses this in her classes where the “learn by doing” method is the most effective way to learn.

When asked if RAMP has influenced her college experience, Ciara responded, “Yes, RAMP has most definitely [done that]. RAMP has aided in my meeting amazing people who have been great resources.” She also shares that her college experience has been more enjoyable because of the off-campus events that RAMP provides for students.

If Ciara could go back in time and give her college freshman self advice, she would say, “Don’t stress. Believe in yourself enough to know that you can accomplish anything you set your mind to.” This is certainly great advice for any student regardless if you are a freshman or a graduating senior!

Tutor Profiles: *Sarah DeAguerdo & Alfredo Raygoza*

Sarah DeAguerdo is a senior in her second year as a RAMP Tutor/Peer Mentor. She is majoring in Philosophy, and minoring in English Literature. She chose her major because she took an introductory philosophy course freshman year and “completely fell in love with the idea of grappling with life’s toughest questions through logical reasoning and critical analysis. After that first class, I changed my major and my general outlook on life.”

Sarah decided to apply to be a RAMP tutor/peer mentor because she had never had a job before and wanted to do something that would put her in a position to use her reading/reasoning skills to help her fellow peers. Sarah shares how she became an avid reader. “My mom struggled with learning English, but after many years of reading, writing, and practicing, she mastered the language and was able to pass on a love of reading and writing onto my sister and me. Because of her effort, I hope to pay the love forward by helping other students realize their full potential as readers, and as students.” Despite her lack of work experience and quiet nature, Sarah immediately took to the job and the students.



RAMP Tutor, Sarah DeAguerdo

When asked what she likes most about working for RAMP, she replied, “I love interacting with the diverse student body at CPP, especially in the small, one-on-one setting that RAMP provides. Everyone has different strengths and weaknesses, and I love helping students improve their reading skills, and their overall academic confidence.”

As a result of summer employment with RAMP’s sister TRIO program, Upward Bound, during the summer, Sarah was hired as an Upward Bound tutor. Upward Bound provides after school tutoring and supplemental advising to high school students in the Pomona area. Sarah’s main campus involvement other than her two jobs is her membership in CPP’s Philosophy Club. Sarah highly recommends attending their weekly meetings if you are at all interested in engaging in friendly, informal philosophical debates.

Sarah mostly grew up in the area but attended high school in Tehachapi. She came back to the area to attend Cal Poly. Her favorite thing about being a CPP student is being surrounded by such pristine natural beauty and greenery. She expands, “The Japanese garden is one of my favorite places on campus to be, especially if I’m having a particularly difficult day. The running water and vibrant koi fish allow me to clear my head of everyday stressors. I will definitely miss the garden the most once I graduate.”

Her hobbies include reading for leisure and attending music events in the area. She loves being a part of the diverse local culture that Pomona provides. She attends poetry readings and open mics at local art galleries, which help to fuel her own creativity and self-expression.

Her post-graduation plans include traveling and teaching English in another country. Sarah explains, “After having two tutoring jobs and realizing my love for human interaction, I’m wary of pursuing a graduate degree right away. However, I do plan on going back to school and getting my master’s degree in either Philosophy or education at some point in the near future.” We have no doubt that Sarah will achieve her goals and continue to have an impact on students’ education and lives!



RAMP Tutor, Alfredo Raygoza

Alfredo Raygoza is also in his second year of serving as a RAMP tutor/peer mentor. He is currently a graduate student in the English program at Cal Poly with an emphasis in Literature and Rhetoric and Composition. As an undergraduate student at Cal Poly, his major was English Literature, with a minor in Spanish. He selected English because his high teacher told him that he had a knack for analysis and a love for reading. Once he arrived on campus, he quickly realized he was not as strong in English as he thought he was. However, he states, “I do not regret my decision because the field is constantly evolving and will never stop leading me towards a journey of lifelong learning and development.”

Prior to joining RAMP, Alfredo worked as an AVID tutor at a local high school for three years. He applied for the tutor/peer mentor position with RAMP because his development as a tutor and educator had become stagnant. He explains, “RAMP caters to different students that come from similar backgrounds as my own, which helps me develop my pedagogical skills while giving back to the community that is shaping me into the scholar I strive to be.” What Alfredo likes most about working for RAMP is meeting new people and helping them reach their goals. He states, “As tutors, we get to witness the growth within our students, which provides a sense of fulfillment that is not otherwise achievable.”

Although Alfredo did not join many clubs, he was

involved in several research projects as an undergraduate and now as a graduate student. He participated at the Cal Poly Student Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activities Conference twice, which helped him prepare for presenting at other conferences. Alfredo also participates in RAMP's Book Club. He reflects, "Book Club is something I wish I would have known about sooner simply because it's an open space for everyone to engage in a conversation influenced by a common read."

When asked what is his favorite thing about being a student at CPP, Alfredo responded, "Being from Pomona, Cal Poly does not reflect the same sort of neighborhood that I grew up in, yet it still feels like home. And, to add to that, the couches on the third floor of the library are pretty comfortable to sleep in."

As a graduate student with two jobs, Alfredo's current and biggest interest is sleeping. He states, "Other than that, however, I really enjoy watching boxing and recommended shows (when there's time)." We doubt that Alfredo is finding much time to watch TV these days considering we often ask him to work extra hours and he is teaching an English class as a Teaching Associate.

To learn more about Alfredo, we asked him if he could be a character from a book (or play), who would it be and why? Alfredo chose Iago from Shakespeare's *Othello*. He explains, "Iago is an underrated villain in that he achieves what he sets his mind to. I do not aspire to take similar tactics as his to achieve what I want, but to think that he basically wins through the power of language is astounding. To top it off, he is a much more complex and interesting character than Othello." Alfredo values the power of language and literacy both in and out of the classroom. It has been an honor for the RAMP staff to work with Alfredo for over a year. We appreciate his dedication to the program and participants!



Fall 2017 RAMP Tutors/Peer Mentors

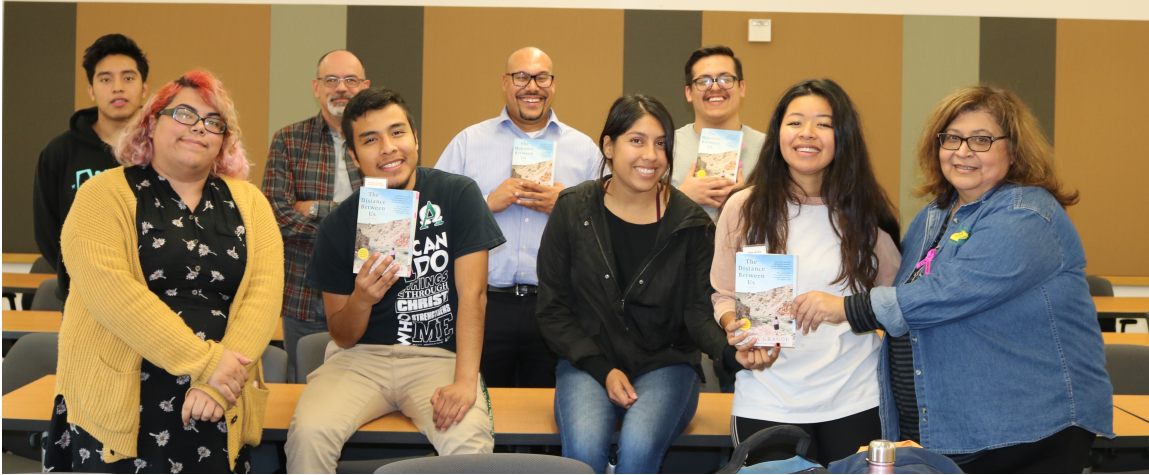
Rutilio Alvarez*
Luna Armas
Sarah DeAgüero
Raymundo Gonzalez

Abbey Ibarra*
Brandon Johnson*
Wayne Page*
Milca Ramos*

Alfredo Raygoza
Cheyenne Romero
Karen Segura*

**RAMP participant*

RAMP Fall Book Club: *The Distance Between Us*



A few RAMP Book Club Members: (back) Ivan Melchor Mendez, Alfredo Lafarga, Dustin Johnson, Alfredo Raygoza (front) Jasmine Martinez, Jonathan Bautista Vasquez, Abbey Ibarra, Milca Ramos, & Rachel Dominguez

In conjunction with Cal Poly Pomona's Common Read, RAMP revised its pick for the fall Book Club. This quarter, we read and discussed *The Distance Between Us* by Reyna Grande. The memoir is a heart-wrenching tale of the devastating toll that immigration can wreak on families torn apart by the unrelenting wave of economic survival. The first part of the book examines Grande's experience in Mexico when her parents leave her and her siblings in search of economic opportunity. The second half explores Grande and her siblings' inability to reconcile their illusory images of the United States with the harsh realities of being cultural and linguistic outsiders with an undocumented legal status. The two parts of the book mirror the double consciousness of immigrants struggling to navigate between two drastically different worlds. Grande courageously explores this duality through the lens of her own family, exposing the often horrifying, yet at times inspiring, details of her immigration experience. Grande not only explores the geographical distance caused by immigration but the cultural, psychological, and socioeconomic divisions that immigration produces.

When Grande's parents immigrated to *El Otra Lado*, it created a severe rift between her parents and her siblings. Additionally, many of their relatives were resentful of being left to care for

Reyna, Mago, and Carlos while their parents were in the United States. The distance of time created a gap between the images that the children had of their parents when they left, and the reality of who their parents became after immigrating to the U.S. Grande often refers to her father as "the man behind the glass," an image of her father that supplanted her real father in his absence. She created an idealized version of her father while he was gone, often talking to the picture frame as if her father was really there. While her parents were crystalized, frozen in the perfection of her memories, Grande often despised her abuelita Evila who was entrusted with the daily trials of raising children that she did not birth. When she was reunited with her parents, Grande had difficulty reconciling the contradiction between her pure parental images with the reality of who they had become after migrating.

After Grande moved to the United States with her father, she was forced to face the great cultural divide between U.S. born or assimilated Mexicans and herself and a widening cultural divide between the family and friends she left behind in Mexico. Grande describes the great isolation felt by immigrant children in American schools. Abruptly placed in a school where everyone spoke English effortlessly and were acclimated to American culture, Grande

struggled on her first day of school and did not possess the language to ask. “Aldama Elementary was three times as big as my school in Iguala. I had no idea where to go as I was used to being with my sister, having her show me what to do, that now I was completely lost” (170). Grande describes the agony of learning the English alphabet, “I wish I could understand what she was saying. I wished I didn’t have to sit here in a corner and feel like an outsider in my own classroom” (172). Mago also experienced rejection when she fell in love with Pepe, a U.S. born Mexican. Mago attempted to talk to the boy but lacked the language skills to communicate with him. To make matters worse, when Mago was walking home from school, “[...]they ran into Pepe and his friends. To Mago’s surprise, Pepe and his friends started throwing gravel from the other side of the tracks yelling, ‘Wetbacks! Wetbacks!’” (211). Grande and her siblings learned through many painful experiences that many U.S. born Mexicans had internalized the American tendency to dehumanize and discriminate against immigrants.

During high school, Reyna and Mago traveled back to Mexico with their mother to visit relatives. The cultural and class fissures caused by immigration immediately became apparent. Grande was appalled how different Mexico looked upon their return. “I knew I had been in the U.S. too long when the sight of my grandmother’s shack, with its bamboo sticks, corrugated metal roof, and tar-soaked cardboard shocked me. *Had I really lived in this place?*” (277). Grande was also stunned to see the children with stomachs swollen from hunger and worms, peering back to her like ghosts of her former self. While Reyna was eager to reconnect with her family and friends left behind in Mexico, her sister Mago reacted to seeing old friends by saying, “I don’t know why you want to be over there with that trash” (281). Grande could not believe that Mago could so easily forget her cultural origins. “How could she just sever the ties that bind us to this place, to these childhood friends of ours who weren’t able to escape poverty like we did?” (282). Grande now realized her sister’s efforts to rid herself of her accent was an attempt to “erase Mexico completely” (282).

For Grande, it was important to maintain her ties to her birthplace while striving for success in *El Otro Lado*.

Grande came to campus to on Tuesday, November 14th to meet with students including lunching with Dreamers. She ended the day by giving a keynote and answering questions from the audience. Afterwards, there was a reception and book signing while the Cal Poly Mariachi Ensemble performed songs that were relevant to the book and its themes. During her speech, Grande told the audience that it was only through examining her immigration experience that she was finally able to turn her pain into beautiful art that could impact those who underwent similar struggles of immigration, exile, and the emotional turmoil of living in two worlds. Moreover, it was through spilling her emotions in writing that she was finally able to see the incredible power of her duality, the ability to speak two languages, and be a conduit between two cultures. She implored those in the audience to envision a world where people migrate not out of economic necessity but out of choice. However, to do this she stressed that we must address a global economy that leaves millions behind.

Winter Book Club will be reading *The Handmaid’s Tale* by Margaret Atwood.



Author, Reyna Grande, speaks at the Library. Her keynote took place later the same day at the University Theatre.

Financial Aid & Academic Success Workshops

In collaboration with ARCHES and EOP, RAMP offered several financial aid, financial literacy, and academic success workshops fall quarter (see table on right). We thank all of our campus partners who presented: Mireya Martinez from EOP, Joy Tafarella from the Cal Poly Federal Credit Union, Dr. Mary Holtom from Counseling Services, and Crystal Steele and Dalia Garcia from the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships.

RAMP Director, Laura Ayon and RAMP Advisor, Dustin Johnson closed the quarter with the final workshop. A total of 146 students from the three programs attended the seven workshops.

Understanding Your Financial Aid	10/10
Online Tools, Saving, & Budgeting	10/19
Credit & Debt	10/24
Managing Test Anxiety	10/31
FAFSA / CA Dream Renewal	11/2
Exploring Scholarships	11/14
Preparing Now for Your Future Career	11/16

Announcing RAMP & ARCHES Winter Off-Campus Cultural Event



RAMP and ARCHES have collaborated to take participants from both programs to see the Cirque du Soleil show, *Luzia*, at Dodger Stadium on Friday, January 26, 2018! RAMP will provide the ticket, transportation, and a boxed meal for twenty RAMP students. The outing serves the purpose of exposing students to a cultural event that they might not attend on their own. Participants who are interested in attending should register on the RAMP website under Events. Once the spots have filled up, we will begin a waitlist.

Additionally, RAMP, ARCHES, and McNair (all TRIO programs) will collaborate to take participants to another cultural event during spring quarter. Look out for the event announcement and details in winter quarter.

Connect with RAMP @CPPRAMP



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