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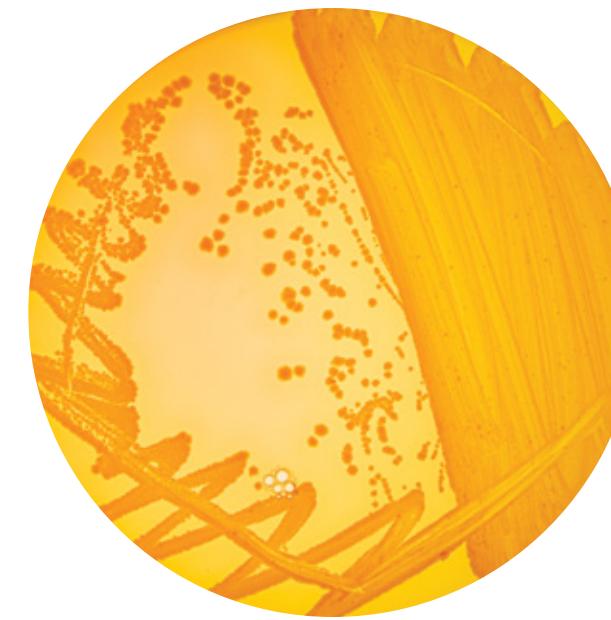
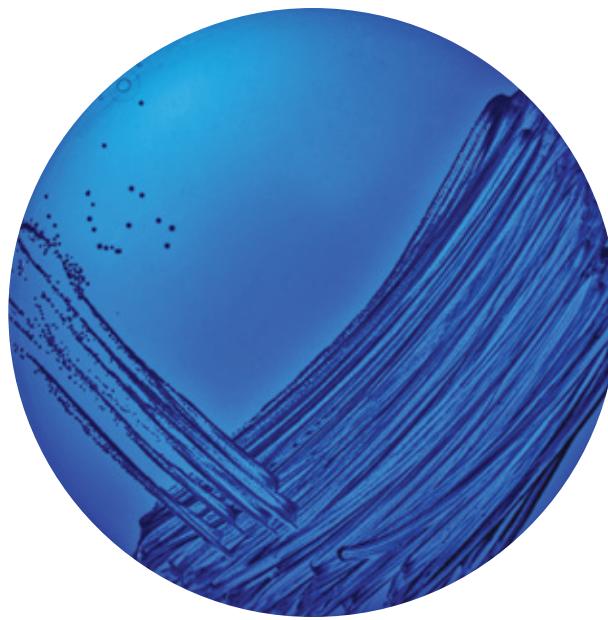
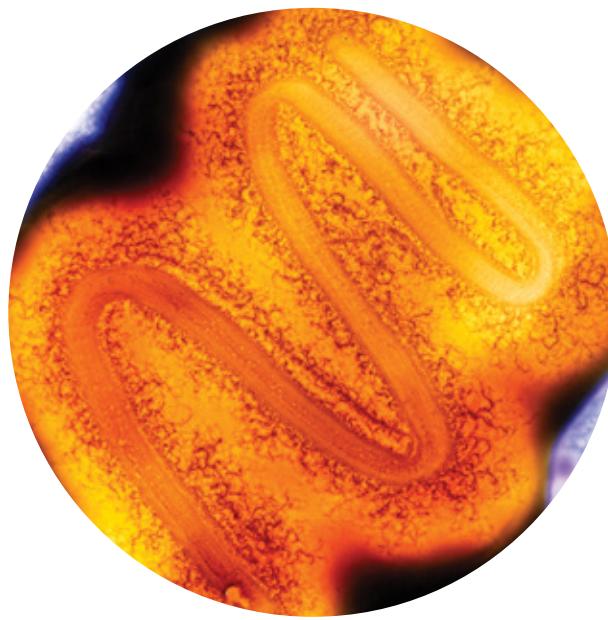
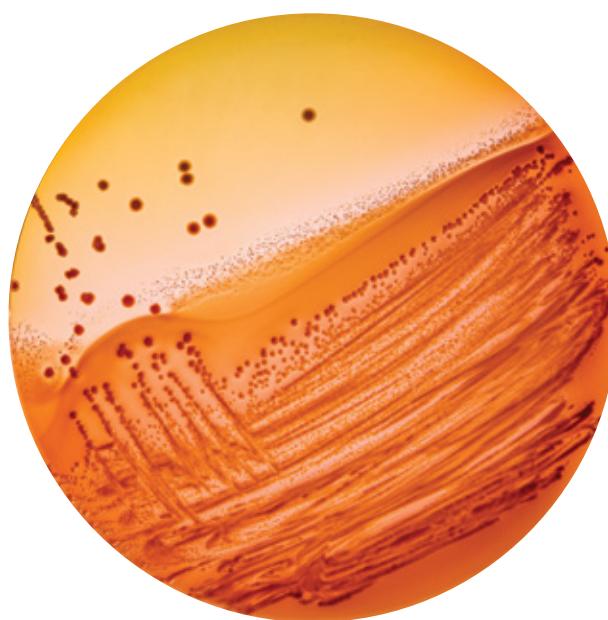
FALL 2020

# EastBay



**A LIFETIME OF SERVICE**

CAL STATE EAST BAY CELEBRATES PRESIDENT LEROY M. MORISHITA



# CAL STATE EastBay

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## FEATURES

### 16 Mind Your Manners

Annual etiquette dinner teaches more than which fork to use when

### 20 Advocating for a Hidden Population

Renaissance Scholars program provides support, resources for former foster youth

### 24 Building a Pipeline

Cal State East Bay programs offer STEM opportunities, training to local students

### 30 A Fight for Equity and Equality

Alumni activists look back at their time at Cal State East Bay

### 34 Woven Into the Region

Under President Morishita's guidance, CSUEB becomes leader in the East Bay

## DEPARTMENTS

04 PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

05 UNIVERSITY NEWS

08 A LOOK BACK

14 FACULTY

28 Q&A

38 OAKLAND CAMPUS

40 GIVING

42 CLASS NOTES

47 PARTING SHOT

COVER: Cal State East Bay President Leroy M. Morishita and Provost Edward Inch pose with a group of students after the 2018 Honors Convocation ceremony.  
GARVIN TSO

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



To the Cal State East Bay community,

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

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

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

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

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

Cal State East Bay will always be a university that centers on student success as the highest priority. I offer my heartfelt gratitude to the faculty, staff and administrators who have risen to meet the challenges over the years and lift the university to greater heights.

Barbara and I look forward to the next chapter of our lives with excitement, and we are grateful for the support each of you have given to the university. As part of the Cal State East Bay family, we know the future is bright for our community.

Go Pioneers!

Dr. Leroy M. Morishita  
President

# CAL STATE EAST BAY University News

## Awards and Recognitions 2020



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

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

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

**College Consensus**  
Best Online Colleges and Universities (No. 38)

**CNBC Make It**  
Top 50 Colleges that Pay Off the Most

**GuideToOnlineSchools.com**  
2020 Best Online Bachelor's Degrees in California (No. 6 nationwide)  
2020 Best Online Colleges (No. 14 nationwide)  
2020 Best Online Bachelor's Degree (No. 16 nationwide)

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

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

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

**ValueColleges.com**  
2020 Best Online Schools in California (No. 3 statewide)

**The Hispanic Outlook on Education Magazine**  
Top 100 Grand Total Bachelor's Degrees (No. 60)  
Top 100 Total Enrollment (No. 92)

**The Princeton Review**  
2020 Best Business Schools in the West  
2020 Best Business Schools

**The Stacker.com**  
2020 Public Colleges Best Return on Investment (No. 65)

**U.S. News & World Report**  
2020 Greatest Racial and Ethnic Diversity (No. 7)  
2020 Top Performers on Social Mobility (No. 24)  
2020 Top Public Schools (No. 40)  
2020 Regional Universities in the West (No. 80)  
U.S. News & World Report 2021 Best Colleges  
2021 Best Colleges Social Mobility - Regional (West) Universities (No. 28)

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

**Washington Monthly**  
America's Best Bang for the Buck Colleges (No. 49)

## An Award for Innovation, Leadership

Fadi Castronovo, Cal State East Bay assistant professor of engineering, knows a thing or two about innovation. His students are regularly spotted on campus, working with virtual reality to evaluate architectural designs. Last summer, many spent time in Italy learning about historical architecture using augmented reality.

This year, Castronovo, along with 24 other CSU faculty members across the state, has been recognized with a Faculty Innovation and Leadership Award. The annual FILA awards honor those who have "demonstrated extraordinary leadership to advance student success, particularly in courses or areas with traditionally low success rates or persistent equity gaps."

"Dr. Castronovo is truly innovative in his teaching methods. He has the intellectual ability, knowledge, professional experience and character to be a star in the department and beyond," Saeid Motavalli, chair of engineering at CSUEB, said in a statement.

Since joining the department in 2016,



Much of Castronovo's work at Cal State East Bay has focused on hands-on learning leveraging multimedia, video gaming and virtual reality technology. His students have participated in projects such as using tech to turn their 2-D designs into 3-D designs to use virtual reality to 'walk through' the design, looking for mistakes or improvements.

Castronovo said not only does his style of teaching engage students differently, but that they are also gaining valuable skills they'll need after graduation.

Castronovo has focused his attention on ensuring his students have the technical knowledge and the confidence and interpersonal skills needed to succeed both in the classroom and in construction management.

"Having them engaged in hands-on projects is a way for them to gain those skillsets making them more competitive as interns, engineers and managers," Castronovo said.

"It's also been proven scientifically that an engaged and motivated student is a better learner."

This year's FILA awardees will receive \$5,000 each, and an additional \$10,000 will be allocated to the faculty members' academic department in support of ongoing innovation and leadership.

## University Raises \$15M, Second-Highest Philanthropic Year to Date

Cal State East Bay is celebrating its second-highest fundraising year in the university's history despite the current global COVID-19 pandemic. The university raised \$15 million from nearly 4,200 gifts given by individuals and organizations, including the Stupski and Koret foundations.

This year's totals also include the university's single-largest gift from an individual, as alumnus Marvin Remmich (B.S. '69, Business Administration) and his wife Susan made a \$5 million gift toward the forthcoming Applied Sciences Center. The ASC will be home to the newly formed Green Biome Institute, the first program of its kind in the California State University and University of California systems.

In addition, the university's Rising in the East campaign formally concluded June 30, with more than \$77.7 million raised for "People, Place and Purpose."

The \$4 million gift from the Stupski Foundation will support a holistic approach

to advising that will focus on general education and major requirements and allow advisers to focus on issues such as housing costs and food insecurity, which may have a direct effect on student success.

The university is developing a model network, called the East Bay College Agile Network, with a \$350,000 gift from the Koret Foundation. The collaboration between Cal State East Bay and the Chabot-Las Positas Community College District will serve 43,000 students annually by leveraging and strengthening existing relationships and initiatives across the two systems, aiming to remove barriers to student success.

"By investing in our technological infrastructure, advising community and much more, we're making significant investments in our students and their success," said Provost Edward Inch. "These partnerships and changes will help our students navigate their academic pathways and succeed in completing their degrees."

## Cal State East Bay College of Business and Economics Celebrates 50th Anniversary

Cal State East Bay's College of Business and Economics is celebrating its 50th anniversary with a year's worth of programming and events.

"We are celebrating transformation," said CBE Dean George Low. "Not only the changes CBE has gone through, but also highlighting our accomplishments and students' success."

Starting out as a division when the university opened in 1957, CBE was officially designated as a college in 1970 and was originally housed in the Music Building on the Hayward Campus. Today there are eight undergraduate programs, 10 graduate programs, and numerous minors and certi-

fications offered in areas including accounting, economics, finance, human resources, information technology, management, marketing, and operations and supply chain management.

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

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

And as part of the celebrations, the college released its new tagline "Empowering Tomorrow-makers."

The new rallying cry (which was chosen via a popular vote by faculty and staff) will be featured in CBE communications, on the college website, and in promotional materials as a way to build and reinforce awareness. The college hopes it will serve as a reminder of what faculty and staff aspire to do every day and of their commitment to helping students transform themselves and the world.

"This theme will continue as we build our brand and reputation for the next five years and beyond," Low said.

To commemorate the past 50 years, CBE will also feature 50 stories about its students and faculty, historic milestones, memorable events, and programs that have supported social mobility for the college's students.

Stories such as a feature about former Dean Jay Logan Tontz, whose legacy CBE is upholding with a challenge to the community to help endow a student award for international business experiences. The award will cover costs related to studying abroad through an international program or undertaking an internship with a company outside the United States.

## Meet America's Next Top Ranger

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

Four years later, Morales is working to ensure students just like her have access to the outdoors. And thanks to this year's CSU Trustees' Scholarship, she can worry less about where she'll get the money to pay for school and more about finishing her degree and finding her dream job working at a national park.

"As an inner-city kid from a family who never really explored nature, the [farthest] I went outside was my apartment complex park or the balcony," Morales said. "To travel to a different location and sleep outside for the first time, underneath the stars, was breathtaking."

Morales is one of 23 students (one from each CSU campus) who received this year's Trustees' Award for Outstanding Achievement.



Morales now works as Antioch's senior recreation leader, organizing hands-on events and programming, including the city's first-ever youth employment fair and a bug day, which featured dozens of animals and critters and 300 regional participants.

"[I enjoy] trying to help other community members explore the land around them," Morales said.

She also wants to bring more representation to the outdoors.

"There's a lot more folks that are noticing that people of color don't have access to parklands," Morales said. "I know that as a person of color, I'm able to be that image to help and guide others. Learning goes beyond the four walls of a classroom, and it's not just for white folks, it's for everyone."

With her eyes set on a future job at one of the country's national parks, Morales is part of the National Park Academy and was supposed to be spending the summer interning at Yellowstone National Park, but her internship was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

# A LOOK BACK

PHOTOGRAPHY GARVIN TSO



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

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

(Right bottom) President Leroy Morishita and 22 other college officials signed a Declaration of Support for the Oakland Promise College Pathways program in 2016. Cal State East Bay now guarantees admission to every eligible Oakland student.





(Top left) President Morishita attends a Hayward Promise Neighborhoods event in Hayward in October 2012. Learn more about HPNs' impact in the region on page 34.



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

(Top right) Cal State East Bay opened its first Pioneers for H.O.P.E. food pantry in September 2016. An additional pantry was funded soon after at the library through a gift from alumnus Allen Warren, seen here, right.  COURTESY OF COMCAST

(Bottom Right) The Cal State East Bay Institute for STEM Education aims to increase access to STEM education and career awareness for students of all levels and backgrounds, regionally and statewide. Here, students in the Hands-On Science Teaching Labs (HOST Labs) program are seen participating in a science activity. Learn more about the HOST Labs program on page 34.





(Top left) President Leroy Morishita poses for a photo with the 2019 Distinguished Alumni Award recipients. From left, Karen Oliver, James Hannan, Sara Toyloy and Ken Kahrs. The DAA gala is an annual event honoring alumni who have shown tremendous leadership in their professions and communities.

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

(Top right) In spring 2018, Cal State East Bay unveiled its new monument letters.

(Bottom right) President Leroy Morishita and his wife Barbara Hedani-Morishita pose with a group of students for a holiday photo in winter 2019.



# A UNIVERSITY ON THE MOVE

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

**A**t every fall convocation he's led since he arrived at Cal State East Bay, University President Leroy M. Morishita has repeated a core part of his mission: to increase the number of tenured and tenure-track faculty at the university to 350. Each year, he would update faculty and staff and remind the packed theater that the total was meant to be a "floor, not a ceiling."

"Cal State East Bay is on the move, and it is the faculty who propel us forward," Morishita said in his 2015 convocation speech. "Our ongoing efforts to increase both the number and diversity of tenure-track faculty provides evidence of our commitment to the university mission, the quality of our academic programs and importance in reflecting the demographics of the communities we serve and the students who attend our great university."

In the past 10 years, that goal has brought new faces, areas of focus, and faculty dedicated to supporting students in reaching their potential. New research has emerged from each of the university's four colleges, and many classrooms now go beyond four walls and rows of desks.



**LAN WANG**

Time with CSUEB: 5 years

Area of Expertise: Operations management and business analytics

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

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

The goal of 350 was not an arbitrary number. Morishita said reaching a faculty size of 350 would create a better undergraduate and graduate experience. It would ensure the availability of course offerings to meet demand while decreasing class size. It would increase opportunities for student-faculty engagement. It would support undergraduate and graduate research. And finally, it would stabilize the university's student-faculty ratio.

"If we are to advance on our aspirations in the areas of academic excellence, institutional distinction and regional influence, we must continue to invest in our tenure-track faculty and our staff," Morishita said in 2012.

Meet a few of the faculty members hired during President Morishita's tenure and learn more about what they're doing to help propel the university forward.



**BALARAMAN RAJAN**

Time with CSUEB: 6 years

Area of Expertise: Managing healthcare operations, efficiency and effectiveness of healthcare technology

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



**ANNA ROSE ALEXANDER**

Time with CSUEB: 4 years

Area of Expertise: Latin American urban history

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



**ARNAB MUKHERJEA**

Time with CSUEB: 7 years, 10 months

Area of Expertise: Social and cultural determinants of health disparities among diverse Asian American subgroups

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



**TONY MARKS-BLOCK**

Time at CSUEB: 4 months

Area of Expertise: Indigenous fire management in California

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



**JESÚS OLIVER**

Time at CSUEB: 4 years

Area of Expertise: Partial differential equations; active learning mathematics; general relativity

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



**IZZET DARENDELİ**

Time at CSUEB: 5 years

Area of Expertise: Strategic management and entrepreneurship

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



**RUTH M. TINNACHER**

Time at CSUEB: 4 years, 4 months

Area of Expertise: Environmental geochemistry/radiochemistry

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



**SAEHYA ANN**

Time at CSUEB: 5 years

Area of Expertise: Customer service; service marketing; hospitality and tourism management

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



**KATHRYN HAYES**

Time at CSUEB: 5 years, 4 months

Area of Expertise: Educational leadership, courses include critical quantitative analysis and research practicum for social justice

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



# Mind Your *Manners*

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

BY DAN FOST

**T**HE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS CHANGED SOCIAL BEHAVIOR. We've stopped shaking hands. Even elbow bumps are discouraged in favor of staying six feet apart.

But good manners have been with us for centuries and are likely to persist.

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

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

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

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

"Etiquette is about the students," Padron said. "It's about how you present yourself. Etiquette is being respectful toward someone else. I carry that theme throughout the entire meal."

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

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

Simran Arora, a nurse who graduated in 2019, said she learned a lot when she participated in that year's dinner. "I still have pieces of paper with a couple of tips hanging in my room to this day," she said.

"It's definitely beneficial," she said. "You never know when you'll be invited to a formal dinner. If I go into management, I'll have to revisit my old notes. It will be very relevant soon." ▶

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

— Assistant Professor Thomas Padron

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

Even Morishita seems to learn a few things. Padron said the president has told him that the dinners have his wife Barbara scolding him for every little faux pas.

“He told me, ‘Every time we go home, Barbara will say, ‘You’re not to supposed to do it that way! Tom didn’t teach it that way,’” Padron said.

“That’s exactly why we do it,” Padron said. “It’s supposed to be fun. It’s a great time to get together, have a good time, eat some good food, be with good people in a good atmosphere. It’s about knowing how to be yourself but also be more refined and more respectful of others.”

Having the cabinet also serves another important role: Students learn how to talk with potential donors and mentors. They’re taught to make eye contact, use formal titles, and make conversation.

“When employers see somebody is a little more refined, that can be a tipping point,” Padron tells his students. “You’ve taken your time to refine yourself. It is going to pay off.”

Arora felt the student servers did an excellent job and the food was well prepared. She also liked sitting with a member of the president’s cabinet and learning a little more about how the university is run.

Most comically, she said, everyone struggled to cut the cherry tomato in their salad.

“Most of the times, you’d just pop it in your mouth,” she said. She also learned to cut her pasta with a fork and knife, rather than just swirling it on her fork, as she usually would do.

“You also got exposure on how to start a conversation,” she said. “They gave us a sheet on conversation starters, how to introduce yourself, and when to use proper grammar and when it’s okay to be slightly less formal.”

When Padron’s students get jobs in the hospitality industry, he often hears from employers,

“Your student spoke so well, they carried themselves so well,” he said. “When I hear that, I’m like a parent, shining.”

Younger students volunteer to serve at the dinners, which provides them a good window on what they’ll be experiencing the next year—as well as a running start at honing excellent etiquette.

“You have to serve before you can sit,” Padron said.

Daniel Marquez served at last year’s meal and was disappointed when the coronavirus caused the university to cancel this year’s event.

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

“Every day, you learn, even if you’ve been in the industry for 20 years,” Marquez said. “There’s stuff I didn’t know.... Table settings are placed with silverware starting from the left and going inside. There’s so many forks and spoons and knives.”

“With the silverware, if I were to just be a regular customer, or a guest sitting down to eat, if I didn’t know anything, I’d eat the salad, appetizer, entrée and dessert with same fork and knife, without knowing to go from outside to inside, from left to right.”

The evening begins with hors d’oeuvres, a chance for the students to confront head-on that most awkward of social scenarios.

“You’ll typically have a drink in one hand and someone comes over with tray of pot stickers,” Padron said. “How many should I take? How do I shake people’s hands? Where do I hold it? What do I do?”

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

Padron prepares the students with a PowerPoint showing the right way to hold silverware (never in a fist), the right way to put peas on the fork (with a knife), how to use a napkin (in the lap, not as a bib) and how to signal servers you’re done (by placing silverware at 4 o’clock).

Arora recalls some other tips, like “BMW”: Your bowl is on the left, your meal is in the middle, and your water is on the right. (That helps keep you from inadvertently drinking from your neighbor’s glass.)

Once seated, the students are treated to a menu befitting a fancy occasion. Highlights from last year include bacon-wrapped water chestnuts, pappardelle pasta with autumn vegetables, caprese salad, sliced tenderloin with rice pilaf and lemon zest asparagus and, to top it off, a chocolate Grand Marnier cake.

Throughout the meal, Padron will walk around the room and offer commentary. His biggest peeve? When students take their phones out.

“It’s one of the things I require in the meal, that the phone is not on the table,” he said. “It’s very difficult for them. This is a three-hour meal from 5-8 p.m.”

He doesn’t directly shame anyone. Instead, if he sees it, he’ll return to the podium after his rounds and say, “I saw some cellphones out. I want you to understand: That means your cellphone is more important than the people around you.”

“They want to crawl under the table when I say it,” he said. ■



## THOMAS PADRON’S TIPS FOR EXCELLENT ETIQUETTE

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

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

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

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

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

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



Esther Fultz, 25, poses for a photo at Cal State East Bay. Fultz said the Renaissance Scholars program was life-changing and a key reason she was able to successfully graduate from the university.

A woman with long dark hair tied back, wearing a maroon button-down shirt, is sitting on a green lawn. She is looking down at an open book or notebook she is holding in her lap. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with trees and a building.

# ADVOCATING FOR A Hidden Population

Renaissance Scholars program provides support, resources for former foster youth

BY NATALIE FEULNER PHOTOGRAPHY GARVIN TSO

**D**IAN RODRIGUEZ WAS A SENIOR IN HIGH SCHOOL when she entered the foster care system. Three months and six homes later, she found herself walking the Cal State East Bay campus. “I remember thinking ‘I can see myself walking this campus every day, I feel comfortable, this is going to be my home for the next four years,’ Rodriguez said.

And home it was.

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

Her story and that of many other Renaissance Scholars is one of persistence and grit in the face of adversity. And through each, a common thread of a program started almost two decades ago that has been key to the success of dozens of former foster youth. ▶

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

— Renaissance Scholar Dian Rodriguez

## A HIDDEN POPULATION

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

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

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

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

“It was a really scary time [and] I am so grateful for Renaissance Scholars because I didn’t have the money to pay for a procedure like that,” she said.

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

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

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

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

“They’ve been a really important group,” Adediji said. “We have people in the community who are ready to help us grow, and I think we’re ready to take that and go with it.”

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

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

## A PLACE TO CALL HOME

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

Esther Fultz was diagnosed with complex post-traumatic stress disorder when she was 23 and now advocates for other scholars to seek therapy. Before her diagnosis, she said she often relied on the support of Adediji and Renaissance Scholars Director Saleem Gilmore.

“I came from an abusive foster family, so college was my way out; it was the only way I knew I could have a chance, so I ran to college,” Esther Fultz said.

And Lottie Fultz shared similar sentiments.

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

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

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

For Rodriguez, who’d had her eyes set on college since her mother died when she was 11-years-old, attending a university with an active Renaissance Scholars program was crucial.

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

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

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

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

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

## A CALL TO GIVE BACK

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## FOSTER YOUTH AND COLLEGE BY THE NUMBERS

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

Sources: National Foster Youth Institute, CalYOUTH, EdSource

# BUILDING A PIPELINE

CAL STATE EAST BAY PROGRAMS PROVIDE STEM OPPORTUNITIES, TRAINING TO LOCAL STUDENTS

BY BARBARA TANNENBAUM

**A**S MANY ADVOCATES KNOW, the word “pipeline” dominates every educator’s discussion of programs that help underserved students master science, technology, engineering and mathematics. To be effective, advocates say, these programs must reach out to students from their earliest school years and continue through high school, college and perhaps even graduate school. Data shows that students emerge from this multiyear pipeline with greatly improved job prospects, higher starting salaries, and a level of science literacy that citizens must develop to be fully engaged in our increasingly technological society.

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

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

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

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

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

That formula—a mix of improvisation, research, experimen-

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

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

## HOST LABS GO VIRTUAL

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

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

Classroom activities for the seven field trips that take place each semester are designed and conducted by CSU students, most of whom are planning careers as science educators. Thus far, 137 CSU students have served as “science guides,” working with more than 2,400 school children since the program’s inception.

When they arrive in the HOST Lab, the fifth-graders don lab coats and goggles—but not for safety reasons.

“I want to spark their imaginations and see themselves as potential scientists,” said LeDuc, a chemist by training. “This puts them directly into that frame of thought.”

During the fall 2020 semester, CSU students worked with online partners to design activities for remote learning.

“That was not a big switch,” said LeDuc, explaining how her colleagues purposefully chose inexpensive items that are easy to find at the grocery or hardware store. “We want the visiting teachers to take these ideas back to their classrooms without feeling limited by lack of budget or resources.” ▶

Instead of in-person class meetings, the Cal State East Bay students practiced their teaching skills over Zoom, with a family member or roommate filming their effort. Department instructors taught the students how to edit that material and produced a special montage to use for future job interviews and to share with teachers through the campus's Institute for STEM Education.

While many policymakers point to STEM's impact on job seekers, LeDuc stresses the social and emotional value of HOST Labs.

"Kids are born with a natural curiosity," she said. "Anything you can do to show a late tween or early teenager that science is cool—and not boring or too difficult—is worth doing."

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

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

## CREATING A BRIDGE

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

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

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

"HPNs is the bridge between the university and the community," said Nelson, the retired dean. "Sometimes it's hard to separate HPN from what [Cal State East Bay] is doing, because we work so

closely with parents and community members. We have a strong network of parents, advisors and educators, so when something like coronavirus hits, we know who to call."

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

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

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

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

## THE NEXT COHORT OF STEM TEACHERS

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

At Cal State East Bay, the Institute for STEM Education on the Hayward campus oversees an expanded MESA program addressing the needs of 20 middle and high schools in Alameda and Contra Costa counties. These include in-person quarterly meetings

and other professional development resources for 28 credentialed teachers serving as MESA advisors in these school districts. They work with 600 students in afterschool STEM-based activities focused on engineering design principles.

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

MESA Day is a statewide contest and the culminating event of the yearlong afterschool program. Student teams enter their collaboratively built prototypes to be judged by MESA advisors and sponsors.

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

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

"We do talk about STEM jobs and workforce preparedness," said Langford. "But having a STEM-literate society is crucial. When a crisis like the pandemic appears, it's urgent to have people who can sift through information. It's just as important for individuals to understand things rationally, which comes from a familiarity with the scientific method, working out what's proven, real and true." 



# Q&A

## Lauren Daniels

STUDENT | ARTIST | ACTIVIST

Cal State East Bay business and marketing student Lauren Daniels, 21, is an artist who paints under the name "Pieces by Peezy." Her most recent pieces in Palm Springs and downtown Oakland on plywood near the police department speak to activism in the current Black Lives Matter movement. East Bay Magazine recently sat down with Daniels to talk about her work, art and activism. (These answers have been edited for brevity and clarity.)

**When did you start painting, and why?**

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

**What inspires your work?**

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

**Tell me about your piece in Oakland and why you created it.**

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

**What has been the response so far?**

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

**Do you consider your art a form of activism and why?**

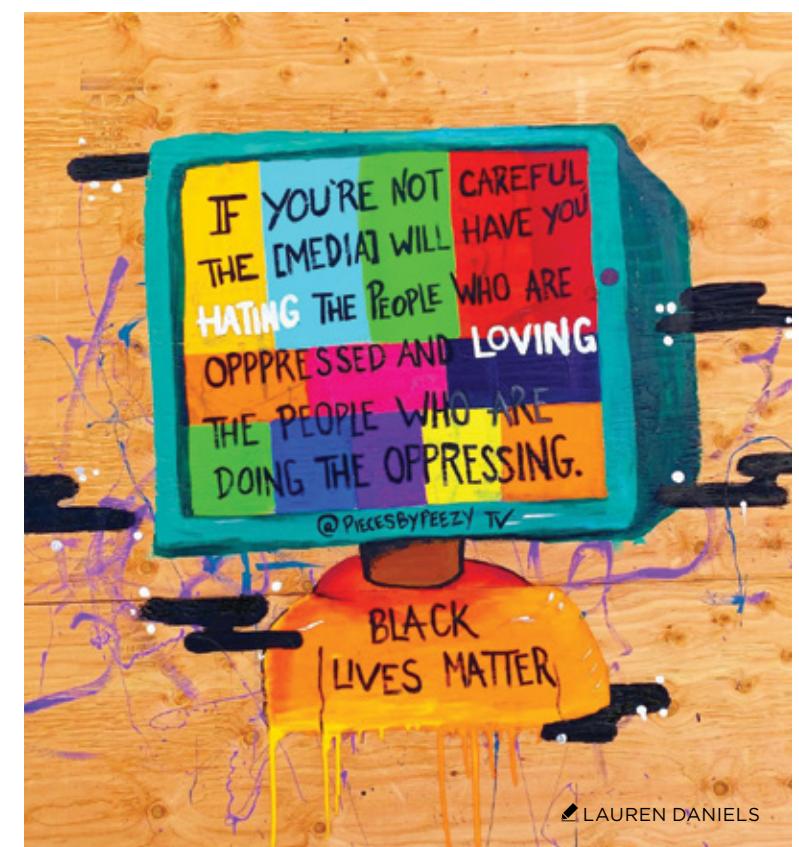
I definitely think art is activism. Music, art, they persuade people and connect them on a deeper level. You can know a lot about somebody by the type of art they enjoy or the music they listen to.

**What's next for you?**

I want to continue making protest art and build my business, not just in California, but I want to travel and make my art in different places. This is an international problem.

**Where can people find your piece and other work you've done?**

My Black Lives Matter piece is on Broadway and 8th Street in Oakland, and more of my work is on Instagram (@PiecesbyPeezy) and on Etsy at piecesbypeezy.etsy.com. (pictured below)





Alumnus Larry Brooks (B.S. '77, Speech Pathology; MPA '84) was an activist and organizer during his time at then-Cal State Hayward and continues to serve as an advocate at the university and in the East Bay.  
© GARVIN TSO

# A FIGHT FOR EQUITY AND EQUALITY

ALUMNI ACTIVISTS LOOK BACK AT THEIR TIME AT CAL STATE EAST BAY

BY DAN FOST

**C**AL STATE EAST BAY ONCE HAD SO FEW MINORITY STUDENTS, faculty or employees that it was known as "Whitey's school." That reputation is nearly inconceivable today, when Cal State East Bay stands as one of the most diverse college campuses in the country, with more than two-thirds of its enrollees students of color.

## SPURRED TO ACTIVISM

Cal State East Bay's former President Ellis McCune said he had to work to overcome the "whitey" stigma attached to the school he arrived at in 1967, when it was still Hayward State College. But he was not alone: Spurred by a culture of activism that defines the university to this day, McCune and many others transformed the university over the years to a place that celebrates its diversity. ►

The work to achieve both equity and equality continues, although activist Larry Brooks—who earned a bachelor's in 1977 and a master's in 1984 from then-Cal State Hayward—said, "I would still say they've got a ways to go."

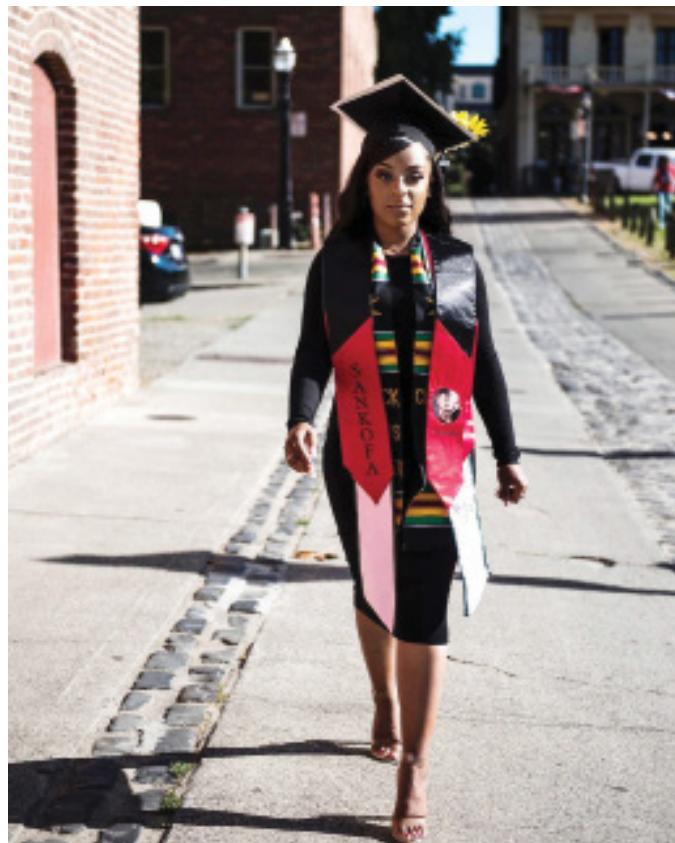
Brooks and other activists from the past several decades at Cal State East Bay recently participated in a panel about the university's history of activism. Panelists shared their memories of protesting and pushing for more equity on campus and their thoughts on ways to continue the work started by those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

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

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

Stacia Echols, a 2020 graduate, said she and her fellow activists worked with Alison Richardson, executive director for Cal State East Bay's Student Equity and Success Programs, to incorporate the center into existing programs such as the Sankofa Scholars Program to give Black students support while the university proceeds with plans to build a dedicated center.

Sankofa is an innovative access and retention program aimed at smoothing the transition process for community college transfer



students to Cal State East Bay and increasing the number of students who earn their bachelor's degrees. Students in the program participate in a one-year cohort educational experience that includes intensive counseling and mentoring.

"It was definitely refreshing and made me feel like we didn't do all this for nothing," Echols said of her work with Sankofa and Richardson.

Echols said she was not only part of a team that kept pressure on administrators to establish the center, but that she also built on the work of student activists who came before her. And like them, she passed the baton to those still on campus to keep the work going.

## BUILDING ON PREVIOUS WORK

Echols said she built on the work of Alyssa Stevenson, a 2017 graduate. They met in the Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority, which Stevenson said "helped to fuel my activism, helped me to learn about my history."

Both women say they worked informally on campus—checking in with other Black students to see how their studies were going and what sorts of pressures they were facing in their lives.

"I built credibility in my community so I could be trusted," Echols said. "I had people reaching out to me at events, saying, 'I'm struggling finding food on campus. Can you help me?'"

She would help find resources on or off-campus, whether that meant psychological support or even help with housing.

Similarly, Stevenson had always been active and engaged, so when she noticed in her sophomore year that many of her African American friends were leaving school, she started wondering why the university did not offer more social, emotional and academic support. She also experienced a microaggression that offered a clue to how other African American students often feel on campus. She was waiting to see a counselor, a white woman, and the Latinx student in front of her had the same issues. The counselor gave that student a long answer and some pamphlets, but then brushed off Stevenson.

So she teamed up with some friends to take action.

"In my dorm, I started creating a list of demands that I felt was necessary," Stevenson said.

Some of the demands include an increase in funding for the university's ethnic studies department, an increase in the number of African American-identifying academic advising and career counselors, and mandatory cultural awareness/racial sensitivity training for all employees. Many sound like the actions Larry Brooks and his colleagues on the Student Unity Coalition were fighting for in the 1970s.

Stacia Echols poses for a graduation photo earlier this year. While at Cal State East Bay, Echols worked to support Black students through programs such as Sankofa.

© COURTESY OF STACIA ECHOLS



Alyssa Stevenson, who graduated in 2017, said being a part of Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority helped "fuel her activism" at CSUEB and beyond.

© COURTESY OF ALYSSA STEVERSON

ate relationships with the students, so they know they are not alone," she said.

Larry Brooks' experiences at Cal State East Bay also helped in-grain activism into his life and work. First, he needed to figure out a career path. He remembers having a debate with university president McCune about the purpose of a college education.

"We had a difference of opinion about why people go to college," Brooks said. "The president thought people went because they need to broaden their awareness. I thought, people are going to get skill sets so they can get jobs. He didn't quite see it that way."

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

"For those of us people of color, in many cases we were the first in our families to go to college," Brooks said. "We were being urged to get a college education so we wouldn't have to take jobs like our parents had."

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

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

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

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

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

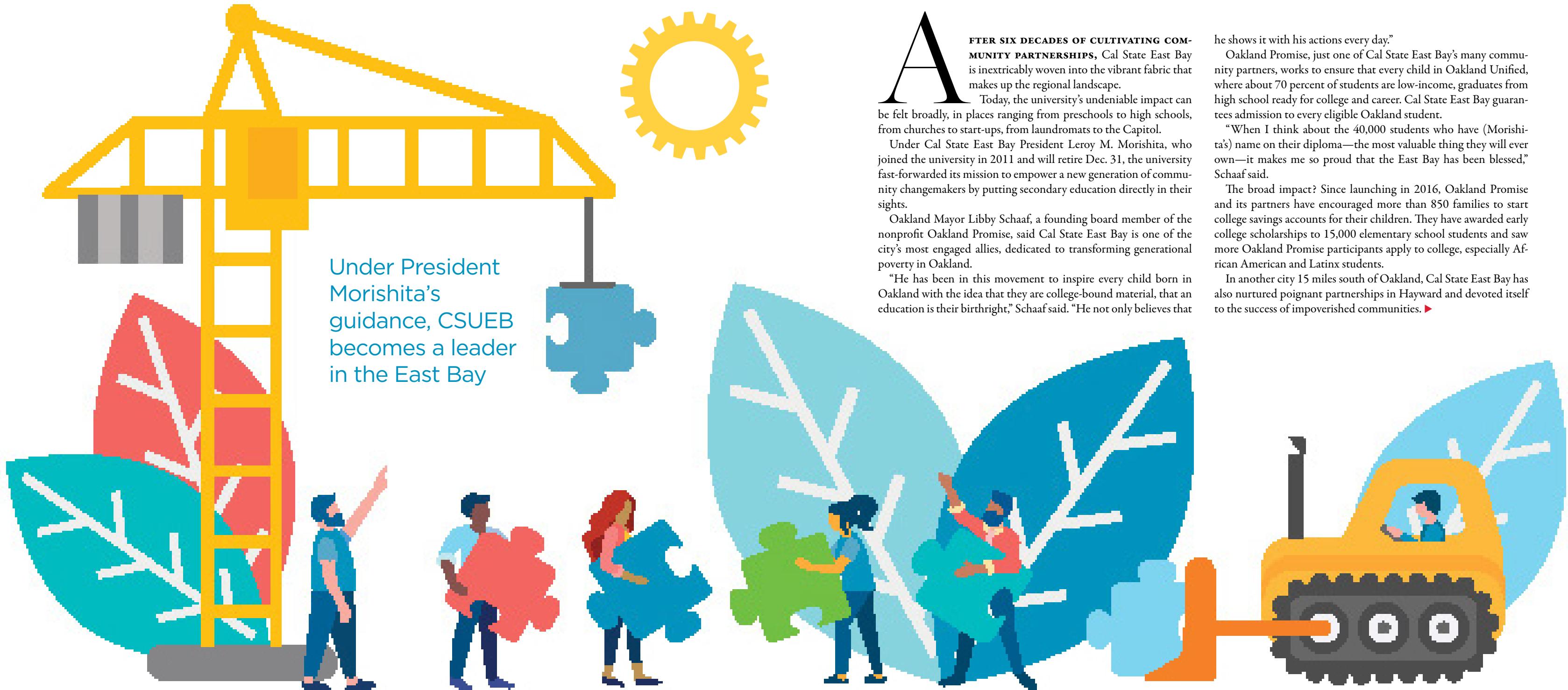
"Just like people are calling for redirecting funds from law enforcement into programs helpful to the Black community, this is an opportunity to look at how funding might be redirected in the university to be more supportive of students of color," Brooks said. "Part of the healing that needs to take place can be inspired by the actions of the university."

The protest movements of 2020 have stirred memories of the movements that came before them, most notably the civil rights and antiwar protests of the 1960s. Cal State East Bay is no stranger to such activism.

Indeed, the activists have often aimed their ire at the university, seeking change in their own campus community. These efforts continue to this day. 

# WOVEN INTO THE REGION

BY ILENE LELCHUK



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

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

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

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

"He has been in this movement to inspire every child born in Oakland with the idea that they are college-bound material, that an education is their birthright," Schaaf said. "He not only believes that

he shows it with his actions every day."

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

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

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

In another city 15 miles south of Oakland, Cal State East Bay has also nurtured poignant partnerships in Hayward and devoted itself to the success of impoverished communities. ▶



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

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

Cal State East Bay undergrads also participate in Hayward Promise through the Promise Interns program. They apply for paid internships in grade schools, often the ones they graduated from, and Chabot College, Tiburcio Vasquez Health Center, and city offices.

It’s a win-win-win for everyone involved.

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

“When we first started the Promise Intern program in 2012, only 55 students from Hayward schools attended Cal State East Bay,” said Carolyn Nelson, dean emerita of the College of Education and Allied Studies and continuing principal investigator of HPNs.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



(Left) CSU Chancellor Timothy White and CSUEB President Leroy Morishita participate in a Super Sunday event in the East Bay. (Top) In recent years, partnerships such as Hayward Promise Neighborhoods, Oakland Promise and the East Bay STEM network have helped empower the next generation of community changemakers. (Top) GARVIN TSO

school-age kids.

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

In one family engagement project, the STEM Network hosted math workshops with hands-on learning fun for parents at the Helen Turner Children’s Center in Hayward, a state-funded preschool. About 100 parents participated in the past two years, Simon said.

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

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

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

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

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

Beyond hands-on teaching, the East Bay STEM Network (under the umbrella of The Institute for STEM Education at Cal State East

Bay) is also about hands-on advocacy.

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

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

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

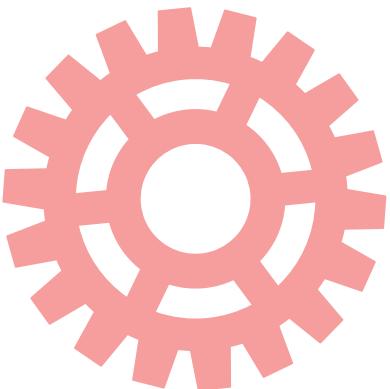
“Early math education is an excellent investment in our future that we cannot defer,” he wrote recently.

The collective impact?

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

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

Together, Cal State East Bay and its connected communities are rising. ■





# GUIDING THE NEXT GENERATION OF GENIUSES

**NONPROFIT MANAGEMENT STUDENT AKEEM BROWN LEADS  
PROGRAMMING AT OAKLAND-BASED THE HIDDEN GENIUS PROJECT**

BY ELIAS BARBOZA '13

When he was a teenager, Akeem Brown's goal was to become an all-star football player, like many of his peers growing up in Berkeley and Oakland. It wasn't until after he lost his university football scholarship due to legal trouble that he began to envision a different future. This major setback encouraged him to pursue a career in politics, as he hoped to impact schools and families similar to those where he grew up.

Two years after leaving football, Brown enrolled in a community college and secured a paralegal job, and he eventually graduated with a double major from UC Irvine. The then 29-year-old father of two said he was ready for a future in politics, creating and passing laws that would improve California communities, until a friend contacted him asking if he would be interested in directly changing the lives of young people in the Bay Area.

Brown's friend worked for an Oakland nonprofit called The Hidden Genius Project, which uplifts Black male youth by connecting them with the resources they need to contribute to the global tech economy.

Focusing on Black males aged 14 through 16, dubbed "geniuses," the organization offers training in technology creation, entrepreneurship and leadership. Its ultimate goal? To spark a transformation within, in hopes of the geniuses returning to their communities and sparking further change.

"I thought about it, and I realized I could have a better impact on young people's lives every day, as opposed to sitting in Sacramento elbowing politicians," said Brown.

Brown decided to join The Hidden Genius Project in 2015 and has felt overwhelming pride ever since, he said. He's been the organization's program director since 2015 and refers to himself and his fellow mentors as educators or "enlighteners" because his mission is to help youth "reveal their light and let it shine."

"Having this program allowed me to sharpen those skills I already

"There's no average day at work," said Brown, who will graduate from CSUEB's Certificate in Nonprofit Management Program this fall. "Sometimes I'm in meetings, or doing interviews or putting out any fires that may arise. But the best part is interacting with the young people. There's always lots of laughter. The work I do is a reflection of what I wish I had when I was that age."

The Hidden Genius Project was founded in 2012 by five Black male entrepreneurs and technologists in response to the disparity between the high unemployment of young Black males and the abundance of career opportunities within the technology sector. Since its inception, The Hidden Genius Project has served more than 6,700 students with 310,400 hours of direct training through Intensive Immersion and Catalyst programs. This summer, the organization branched out to Southern California and welcomed 71 new geniuses across its Oakland, Richmond and Los Angeles cohorts.

Each Intensive Immersion cohort runs 15 months. Students receive more than 800 hours of mentorship and training, meeting once per week and one Saturday per month during the school year and Monday through Friday during the summer.

Although The Hidden Genius Project takes up most of his time, Brown said he's been able to simultaneously educate his geniuses and acquire his nonprofit management certificate, thanks to the program's flexibility.

The Nonprofit Management Certificate Program provides students with insight into board development, financial management, fundraising, marketing, program evaluation and nonprofit law. The program can be completed in six to nine months, with classes typically held at CSUEB's Oakland Center, but is currently online due to California's shelter-in-place orders.

"Having this program allowed me to sharpen those skills I already

had, and most importantly, helped me focus on the human side of the nonprofit sector," said Brown. "I come from a corporate law background, so during lectures, I'm reminded that what we're dealing with in class aren't 'things'; they're human beings. The [Nonprofit Management] program has allowed me to shift from a corporate mindset to a human evaluation and management mindset."

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

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

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

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

"With knowledge of business, we teach young folks they can be pioneers and game-changers," said Brown. "Why do young people have to wait until college to learn these things?"

While geniuses are busy conquering technology and business, Brown says the third and equally important subject they learn is leadership. He and his team educate geniuses on how to build stronger friendships, better present themselves, and cooperate as a team to lift each other up. "[The Hidden Genius Project] is not a bootcamp, it's more than that," said Brown. "We are a holistic youth development organization, which is why you don't hear 'code' or 'tech' anywhere in our name. [These geniuses] can have a million-dollar skill set, but that's not enough. We

teach them how also to be a people person."

Typically, enlighteners and geniuses meet in person at their designated campus, similar to a classroom. But because of California's COVID-19 shelter-in-place orders, The Hidden Genius Project has moved online, using video conferencing to communicate. An important aspect of the organization is for cohorts to interact with each other in person, making internet conferencing a challenge for Brown and his team. But surprisingly, said Brown, the geniuses are doing just fine collaborating through video.

"There's nothing like in-person contact, and we miss the camaraderie, the brotherhood, and being able to look at each other in the same room and crack jokes, so it's been a challenge to keep them engaged," said Brown about the geniuses. "But so far, most of the geniuses haven't had a problem with the online format, and they're doing well."

While COVID-19 brings daily challenges to The Hidden Genius Project, another current topic the organization has touched on is the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. Brown has discussed the recurring BLM headlines and protests with his geniuses, bringing awareness to the situation while making sure it doesn't overshadow the curriculum and the organization's mission. Brown emphasizes The Hidden Genius Project is not a response to any unlawful treatment of people of color. Instead, he and his team use their organization as space for young men to better themselves and be a positive transformation the world needs.

"I don't protest on the street or hold up signs," said Brown. "My protest is on the inside, to train and give young folks a new outlook and new set of skills to navigate society as a Black male. I want to give them the knowledge base to think about humanity and how to preserve lives and think about their community."

After Brown earns his nonprofit management certificate, the now 36-year-old father of three says he will continue giving back to society by becoming a community college professor, teaching political science or business law. He also aspires to manage his own legal firm and assist others in building their own businesses.

"I want to leave a legacy for future generations," said Brown. "What can I build today to positively impact the world tomorrow?" 



**INVEST IN GENIUS**

THE HIDDEN GENIUS PROJECT AT-A-GLANCE

2,491 GENIUSES SERVED IN 2019  
6,345 TOTAL GENIUSES  
310,400+ TOTAL HOURS OF TRAINING  
4,625 GENIUSES SERVED IN 2019  
123 GENIUSES SERVED IN 2019  
91 NEW GENIUSES SERVED IN 2019  
95% GENIUSES SERVED IN 2019  
95% GENIUSES SERVED IN 2019  
95% GENIUSES SERVED IN 2019

**PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

**INTENSIVE IMMERSION**

- Intensive Immersion provides computer science, entrepreneurship, and leadership training for Black male youth.
- Open to Black males ages 14 to 16 months, and requires more than 300 hours of training and learning.

**CATALYST PROGRAMS**

- One- and multi-day programs including our annual Brother to Brother Leadership Camp, Programming and Future Skills Seminars.
- Catalysts include the Oakland Science Team, Alameda County Juvenile Justice, and Oakland Unified School District.

**YOUTH EDUCATORS**

- Hidden Genius Alumni who have completed Immersion Programs are trained as facilitators for Catalyst programs.
- Catalysts include the Oakland Science Team, Alameda County Juvenile Justice, and Oakland Unified School District.

WWW.HIDDENGENIUSPROJECT.ORG  
f t i n @HIDDENGENIUSPRO





**#GENIUSREVEALED**

When designing his app for The Hidden Genius Project's Intensive Immersion Program, Barry set out to create a video game that would provide players with an empathetic look into his own experience of feeling like an outsider.

"The player starts off as me in middle school," Barry explains. "You go through every day as me, and depending on what you do, it affects your popularity status and how you fit in. But [no matter what you do] the options never let you be the most popular kid."

The most important thing Barry gained from The Hidden Genius Project was connecting with community. "I learned how to interact with people more. I was really quiet at the start, toward the middle I was really loud, and [by] the end I found a nice balance in between."

He attributes this balance to helping him understand himself even more. While his fellow Geniuses offered feedback to how he might change things up, his mentors encouraged his uniqueness. "The mentors were like, 'I like you because you're not afraid to be yourself,'" he recalls. "I never felt like I was giving up a part of myself; I was just understanding myself and becoming a better version."



**BARRY ESTEEN**  
HIDDEN GENIUS PRO & INVESTOR

**INVEST IN GENIUS**  
www.hiddengeniusproject.org/donate



## COLLEGE OF SCIENCE ADDING SCHOLARSHIPS, MENTORSHIP, PROGRAMMING TO SUPPORT STUDENTS OF COLOR

BY NATALIE FEULNER

**C**al State East Bay College of Science Dean Jason Singley believes all college students have what it takes to succeed. What they don't always have is the ability to attend school, participate in research projects, study, work multiple jobs, and many times provide for their families.

Thanks to a new use of a \$1 million endowment from the Malavalli Foundation, upwards of a dozen College of Science students will be able to worry less about funding their education and more about completing their degree.

"The new use of this gift is going to be transformative for the college," Singley said. "Many of our students struggle with financing their college education, particularly some of our local and BIPOC students. This gift helps us get to a new level in how we support our students."

The Malavalli Family Foundation, a family fund based in Los Altos, California, guided by the philanthropic and personal values of Kumar and Vijaya Malavalli, supports education, healthcare, arts and culture programs throughout the Bay Area and overseas.

"We are honored to further support the students of Cal State East Bay in their pursuit of higher education," said Kumar Malavalli. "A large part of our mission is to create a brighter future for people of all ages and backgrounds, and we feel this gift will help students from our community become the next generation of great scientists and engineers in our region and beyond."

Cal State East Bay President Leroy Morishita said he is grateful for the endowment's new direction and hopes it will help even more students fill the regional workforce.

"Mr. Malavalli is an outstanding benefactor and supporter of our students and higher education in not only the Bay Area but in California and beyond," Morishita said. "We are grateful for his generous gift, which will help us further support our students as they become the innovators and changemakers our world needs."

### DRIVING THE ECONOMY

In recent years, the College of Science has doubled in size, and many of its graduates have gone on to work at various major science and technology companies in the Bay Area. They fill a workforce need for well-trained and diverse employees already in the area and plan to stay.

"As an institution, that's where we can be transformative," Singley said. "We want to show [companies] that employees are right here in their backyard, and by investing in our local talent, they can attain the kind of diversity they are looking for. The students who excel in STEM are already here."

However, many times, those students struggle with financing their college. Ultimately, Singley said he hopes to offer 10-12 scholarships at \$3,500 each. The college offers only a handful of scholarships that size, so he hopes having several that will cover about half of tuition will begin to close an equity divide he has observed over the years.

"I've taught here for many years, and all of the students who come to us can be successful ... but so many of them drop off because they are working too much and not able to spend enough time on their studies," he said.

Students applying for the funds will have to have attended Mt. Eden, Hayward or Tennyson high school or be a returning Cal State East Bay student who previously graduated from one of those three high schools and participated in an African American or Latinx affinity group. They must be in good academic standing and enrolled in the College of Science, majoring in any of the following concentrations: biology, chemistry, engineering, computer science, physics or environmental science.

"We hear a lot about the tech sector in the Bay Area, and it drives our economy, but a lot of our local students and students of color don't have access," Singley said. "If we can help our students earn their degree in the sciences, they'll have access to that economy, and it will be transformative to their lives."

Part of that help comes from professors who can relate to some of the struggles faced by students of color.

A community created this summer called "BIPOC In STEM" provides a safe space for students of color to meet regularly with faculty and staff to share their experiences as minorities in the college and at the university. It is a small community space where they can express who they are, support each other, and build relationships with other people of color who share their academic interest and cultural or ethnic experiences.

In addition to the increased social and emotional support, Singley said the college is expanding its focus on supporting students who are new to STEM and recently introduced the STEM Lab, an expansion of the already successful Math Lab program. The collaborative programs include peer learning assistants—students who have already been successful in the program—who then take classes with the students, help

lead in the classroom, and are also available outside of class for tutoring sessions and office hours.

"Both of these look to provide additional support to students who are in their first math or science class," he said. "Science is not an easy major ... but what we know is that if students can get through those first few classes, they're more likely to complete their degree."

### LOOKING AHEAD

This year, in addition to the new funding through the Malavalli gift, the College of Science is also researching best practices for providing more equitable opportunities for students. Through a program called STEM Vista and under the guidance of Associate Dean Danika LeDuc, Michele de Coteau, STEM Lab coordinator, Alicia Still, Math Lab coordinator, interns Allison Pelland and Jose Canela will spend a year researching and developing a program and projects that support students of color.

"It has been an absolute pleasure working with the STEM Vistas ... they bring youthful energy and passion to their projects [and] they are deeply committed to making higher education more equitable," LeDuc said.

With their help, the college can move beyond the logistics of running the Math and STEM labs to focusing on implementing programs supporting pedagogical change and providing additional academic support.

"With the Vistas help, we can be more intentional about making sure that these changes are also equitable and asset-based," she said. "Their learning, research and collaborations will build upon the structures we already have in place. This work is important ... because equity and asset-based thinking do not belong in a particular college or segment of society, it is relevant to all disciplines and careers and something of which we all need to be mindful."

Also new this year, a partnership between the Alumni Association and the College of Science to create networking opportunities between students of color majoring in STEM and alumni of color who majored in and now work in STEM fields.

Its goals?

To increase freshman and sophomore BIPOC retention in STEM majors, connect students with alumni, and encourage more students of color to explore and pursue STEM careers.

To date, the program has hosted three virtual web panels and discussions, which each drew several dozen participants.

Thanks to philanthropists' efforts such as the Malavalli Foundation, partners within the university community, and the support of faculty and alumni, the College of Science is better prepared to support its students.

"The more ways we can integrate these ways of thinking into the context of our disciplines, the more successful we are likely to be in supporting all our students to reach their potentials," LeDuc said.

And alongside that potential, a sense of empowerment.

"We're here to elevate and empower our students," Singley said. "They come here with a mission in mind, and our job is to lift them up and help them be successful." 

*To support STEM initiatives at Cal State East Bay, including the forthcoming Applied Sciences Center, please contact William Johnson, vice president of University Advancement at (510) 885-4170.*

# 40 UNDER 40

CAL STATE EAST BAY

## AWARD RECIPIENTS

CAL STATE EAST BAY and the Alumni Association recognizes young alumni who have made significant contributions toward improving and uplifting their communities and beyond. The 40 Under 40 award program identifies alumni age 40 or younger who have demonstrated dedication, excellence and development in their professional, philanthropic and personal endeavors. To learn more about the 40 Under 40 Class of 2020, please visit: [csueastbay.edu/40u40](http://csueastbay.edu/40u40)



**DR. SHAILY ARORA**  
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**ANURADHA DWARAKANATH**  
(MBA '11) Senior Program Manager, Lam Research



**PETER HLADUN** (B.S. '05, Industrial Engineering; M.S. '10, Engineering Management) Vice President and General Manager, Cork Supply U.S.A.



**AARON LIN** (B.S. '18, Computer Engineering) Project Engineering Specialist, U.P.S.



**TAMARA OSIVWEMU**  
(M.S. '13, Educational Leadership) Partner, The Management Center



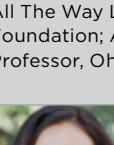
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(MBA '17) Planning Manager, Facebook



**DR. MIKU SODHI** (M.S. '10, Health Care Administration) Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Shasta Cascade Health Centers



**SABRINA WASHINGTON** (B.A. '05, Mass Communications) Owner, Luna Light Productions



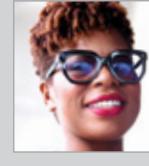
**MOHAMMED BEIG**  
(B.S. '11, Business Administration) Chief Financial Officer, Janie & Jack



**MELVIN FAULKS** (B.A. '17, Sociology & Ethnic Studies) Program Coordinator, Roots Community Health Center



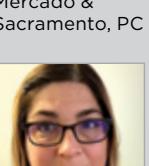
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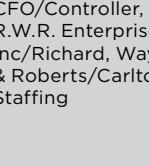
**PRINCE JACKSON** (B.A. '14, Multimedia Design) GoodKnight Life, Owner and Host



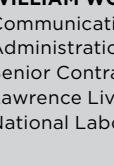
**KRISTINE MASSEY**  
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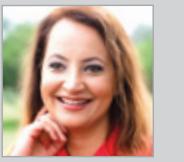
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**NADIRA HELMAND AKBARI** (B.A. '04, Art) Vice President, Avison Young



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**RAVEN DAVIS**  
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**TAKIYA GARDNER** (B.A. '05, Sociology & Criminal Justice Administration; M.P.A. '09) Division Vice President, YMCA of San Francisco



**ERIC LAU** (B.S. '06, Business Administration) Market Leader, Senior Vice President, Bank of the West



**BELEN MENJIVAR** (B.A. '12, Spanish) GANAS Program Specialist, Cal State East Bay

WOMEN ON THE RISE

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



**GRACE HENKE**  
(M.S. '13, Statistics) is an anti-obedience dog trainer and Mensa Mutts founder. Henke went from China to earning her degree in statistics, to negotiating a 15 percent raise at a Bay Area startup to quitting a month later to start her dog training business. Henke works with dog owners who have "tried



everything" but are still struggling to communicate with their shy, fearful, and reactive dogs. She also helps the owners to live a fuller life with a calmer, more relaxed and well-behaved dog.

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



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

# CLASS NOTES

## 1960s

**BILL LOCKYER** ('66, Multiple Subject Teaching Credential) first conceived the Bay Trail idea more than 20 years ago. Lockyer will finally see himself immortalized in the naming of the bridge crossing between San Leandro and Oakland International Airport. Lockyer continues to be recognized for his contribution to the preservation of local scenic landscapes in the naming of a key Bay Trail bridge crossing.



**ROBERT WILLIAMS** (B.A. '69, History) is dedicated to serving humanity alongside his wife, Leslie. Leslie was in education, and Robert was in health care. After rewarding careers, they enjoyed several years of active retirement before she became ill. They received a prestigious award for service to international optometry in 2002 in Versailles. Robert received an honorary doctorate of Humane Letters in 2010 from an optometric institution.

## 1970s

**CHRISTOPHER STIER** (B.A. '72, Anthropology) became a sports journalist after college. He covered both Major League Baseball teams in the Bay Area and later moved to the New York area, where he covered the New York Mets and lastly, the New York Jets. He covered one Winter Olympics (1980) and many other sports. The field ethnography course he completed at Cal State Hayward prepared him to approach and deal with people who wanted nothing to do with his prying questions. Stier traveled with all the teams he covered, was president of the Baseball Writers' Association of America in 1991, and has always believed Cal State Hayward helped set a foundation that led him to a fun, challenging and never-a-dull-day career.

## 1980s

**CHAD COOMBS** (B.S. '82, Business Administration) is a tax lawyer and C.P.A. with many years of experience in prominent law and accounting firms. Coombs has represented clients in a wide variety of litigation matters and complex business and real estate transactions. He has provided tax guidance to financially distressed businesses, creditors, bankruptcy trustees, debtors-in-possession, liquidating trustees, receivers, and assignees in assignments for the benefit of creditors. He has published numerous articles and been cited and followed in multiple United States District Court opinions, and successfully represented the noteholders in a landmark case in the Orange County Chapter 9 bankruptcy. He recently started as chief tax counsel at Thomas Seaman Company, which serves as a judicial receiver, including in investment fraud cases brought by the Securities and Exchange Commission.

**MELANIE DAVIS** (B.A. '82, Mass Communications) returned to school to earn a Ph.D. in human sexuality education after a 25-year career as a marketing copywriter and journalist. Her specialty as a curriculum developer and trainer is sexuality and aging. In addition, she frequently delivers presentations on shifts in life and perspectives. Davis recently co-authored a chapter titled "Networking, Mentoring, Collaborating, and Risk-Taking: A Four-Strand Approach to Sexuality Leadership" in a book titled "Sexuality Leadership, Empowerment, and Consultation" (Routledge, 2020).

**JAMILA MAKINI** (M.S. '82, Supervision/Administration) has taught high school math and science in California. Makini was also a department chair and held numerous positions from the national level to the local level on behalf of teachers. She also traveled and taught high school in Morocco.



**JOHN TENUTO** (B.A. '84, Political Science) entered the insurance industry in 1985 after graduating from Cal State Hayward and has been in the industry for 35 years. Tenuto relocated from the Bay Area to San Diego in 1992. He started his brokerage in 1994, then sold it to a large national firm in 2001. He joined the Insurance Office of America in 2005, establishing their first office in California. He is now the regional president for the western region, comprising four states, and has been on the board of directors of the company since 2010.

## 1990s

**ANTHONY MATTOS** (B.S. '94, Business Administration) is a senior account manager for RedLine Solutions. Mattos has successfully worked in the high-tech industry as an account manager and is one of the top performers in his industry. He helps companies from high-tech to food processors with their track and trace needs. Mattos has four children who are all in college, one who is a graduate student at Cal State East Bay.



**GREG RAMIREZ** (M.A. '96, Economics) was appointed as city manager, joining the City of Camarillo after serving as a city manager in Agoura Hills for 16 years. Mr. Ramirez has over 26 years of local government experience. He began his career in Agoura Hills in 1998, progressing through the positions of assistant to the city manager and assistant city manager until he was appointed city manager in 2004. Prior to working with the City of Agoura Hills, Mr. Ramirez served two years with the League of California Cities southern California office, one year as an analyst with the City of Santa Fe Springs, and in internships with both the City of La Mirada and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission.

**JAMILA MAKINI** (M.S. '82, Supervision/Administration) has taught high school math and science in California. Makini was also a department chair and held numerous positions from the national level to the local level on behalf of teachers. She also traveled and taught high school in Morocco.



**KAREN YODER** (B.S. '96, Physical Education; M.S. '99, Kinesiology) was hired as the new athletic director of Cal Maritime. Yoder has served as an administrator, instructor and coach with more than 20 years of experience at all competitive levels, as well as a former college and professional athlete. She was most recently the athletic director at Mission Community College in Santa Clara.



**ERICK BELL** (B.S. '97, Business Administration) worked for several Big 4 accounting firms. He began teaching accounting, including as an adjunct professor at Cal State East Bay. After 16 years of doubling as an adjunct professor and accounting professional, Erick joined Las Positas College as a tenured accounting professor. He was recently hired as a dean of academic services with responsibility for public safety, advanced manufacturing, transportation, health and kinesiology.

**KARWANNA DAVIS** (B.A. '97, Mass Communications) founded her own business, She's Got Goals, LLC. Davis has fond memories of CSUH. Leaving the inner city and immersing herself in a very diverse world of higher learning completely revolutionized the way she viewed life.



**MICHAEL COSTA** (B.A. '99, Archaeology & Biological Anthropology) has written books since high school and college. He published them after graduating from Cal State Hayward. He has written about 139 books total, including current projects, and

mostly writes about ancient Egypt. His first book was "Eye of the Pharaoh."

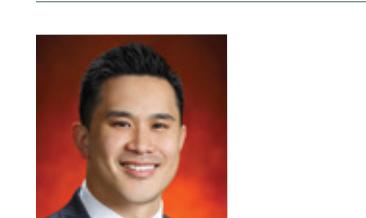
**SUSAN HENDERSON** (MBA '99) has been appointed to the State Rehabilitation Council. Henderson has been executive director at the Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund since 2008. She held multiple positions at the Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund from 1997 to 2008, including director of administration and managing director. She was a law firm administrator at Adams, Broadwell, Joseph and Cardozo from 1993 to 1997 and law firm manager at King, Shapiro, Mittelman and Buchman from 1993 to 1994.

## 2000s

**NASIF SIDDIQI** (B.S. '02, Business Administration) is the new managing director of INFINITI Motor Company's International Markets. Siddiqi will take the reins of a diverse region of INFINITI's business based in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates. Prior to this appointment, Siddiqi held the role of general manager of Global Sales Operations since 2018 for INFINITI Motor Company based in Yokohama, Japan. He joined INFINITI's global staff from Nissan North America, where he led strategy for the western region. Prior to joining the Nissan family, Siddiqi held leadership roles with Maserati North America and Toyota U.S.A.

## 2010s

**AARON CHANG** (M.S. '10, Health Care Administration) was named president of the two campuses of its Sisters of Charity Hospital. Chang will head the main hospital campus and the St. Joseph campus, both in Buffalo, NY. Chang most recently served as a market chief operating officer for San Francisco-based Dignity Health, part of Chicago-based CommonSpirit Health.



**MARIA PEREZ** (B.S. '15, Business Administration) got engaged at her graduation to her boyfriend of five years. Perez was hired at Merritt College during spring 2015, right before graduation. At 23-years-old, she held numerous critical administrative positions. In 2017, she became the college bursar, where she coordinated student financials. Perez was able to help her parents and give back to her community. She is very grateful for her education as she is a first-generation high school and college graduate.

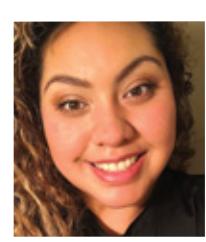
**RACHEL DIAZ** (M.S. '16, Counseling) is a new school psychologist for Dunbar Elementary. Previously, she was a school psychologist for the Vallejo City Unified School District.



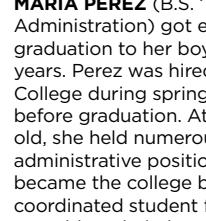
**CHALIA LA TOUR** (B.A. '12, Theatre Arts) received her Tony awards nomination for "Best Performance by an Actress in a Featured Role in a Play" for her performance in "Slave Play." She is an alumna of the Yale School of Drama's M.F.A. Acting program and is also an alumna of the Actors Theatre of Louisville Professional Training Program and The British American Dramatic Academy. She is a proud member of the Actors Equity Association.



**STEPHEN MILLS** (M.S. '15, Educational Leadership) is the new principal of Twin Peaks Middle School. He comes to Twin Peaks Middle School from Del Norte High School, where he was an assistant principal for five years. Prior to Del Norte High School, Mills taught for 18 years, starting in the Bay Area. He was hired at Westmoor High School in 1996 to create an academy-style class for 20 at-risk freshmen.



**ROXANA DE LA O CORTEZ** (B.A. '16, Sociology) is an Oakland Unified School District educator and had to quickly pivot to learn how to educate and make her students feel welcome through a computer screen. Virtual instruction is no easy feat for her students. "This pandemic has really shed even more light on the opportunity gap, the inequities that work within this system, the lack of resources in schools, and so much more," Roxana said.



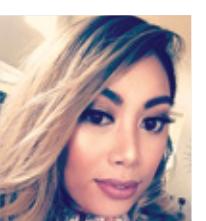
**MARCUS CREEL** (B.A. '17, Art) met the executive director for Oakland Digital and fellow alumnus Shaun Tai



**TAMARA MARTIN** (B.S. '16, Nursing) started working for Kaiser as a new grad in the labor and delivery unit. Within almost four years on this unit, Martin has advanced to a Staff Nurse 3 and a preceptor for nurses new to labor and delivery. She is also a member of various committees that help improve practices on the unit.



**ANA-CECILIA QUINTANILLA** (B.A. '16, Communication) is the associate program manager for social media for Sephora. Quintanilla has been able to work in several positions in her dream field of social media marketing. In her current role, she leads a diverse female team of marketers, creatives, writers and merchants to produce social media content for Sephora (her dream company and job).



**CHRISTINA YANKLING** (B.A. '16, Ethnic Studies) is a recruiter for Coalition Technologies. She has found her passion for helping people identify their strengths and skills to develop their careers. As a recruiter, helping people find jobs and walking them through applying and interviewing has become something she considers rewarding.

('02) while he was a student at Cal State East Bay. By being proactive, Creel soon established an unofficial mentorship with Tai. Creel credits his mentors for expanding his skillset and network. Creel is further advancing his career in his newly minted role as graphic design specialist for Peralta Community College District.



**SHANN HALLINAN** (B.A. '17, Art) has created Exploranimation for those who love animation. Hallinan hopes to foster curiosity and inspiration by providing fresh perspectives and encouraging her audience to get involved. Hallinan has interviewed industry professionals such as Don Peri, Timothy Hittle and Jim Roderick to share their experiences.



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

## FOREVER PIONEER

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

**JUSTIN DABIL** (B.A. '18, English) was hired as a new police officer for the Pleasanton Police Department. Dabil, a military veteran, was born and raised in Antioch and graduated from Berean Christian High School. He enlisted in the U.S. Army in 2009.

**HIR PATEL** (B.A. '19, Sociology) has been working at Santa Clara Unified School District, and it is such a rewarding opportunity for him. Patel has also started his master's program to continue with his higher education journey to support his future goals and society.

**DARREN NELSON** (B.S. '20, Construction Management) is a Business Operations and Development Manager for Professional Powerwashing and Maintenance. Not getting accepted to Stanford University was the best thing that could have

happened to Nelson. He now has the opportunity to scale a business with the knowledge he learned while studying, into a multi-million dollar business. If he had gotten accepted into Stanford, he would have written books for other people to make millions.

**MISHEEL MUNKHBAT** (B.A. '20, Communication) started his career while pursuing his bachelor's degree at Cal State East Bay. He applied for an internship position at Gilead Sciences in the human resources department. Munkhbat did not get hired in the human resources department; instead he got hired for the Quality Assurance department as a communications intern. He continued to work part-time until graduation and was hired full-time after graduating and is now a quality associate II.

## In Memoriam

### Cal State East Bay Remembers Alumnus, MLB Player Joe Morgan

Cal State East Bay alumnus, Major League Baseball player and sports broadcaster **JOE MORGAN** died in early October after a legendary life on and off the field, and more recently, supporting students at the university. He was 77.

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

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

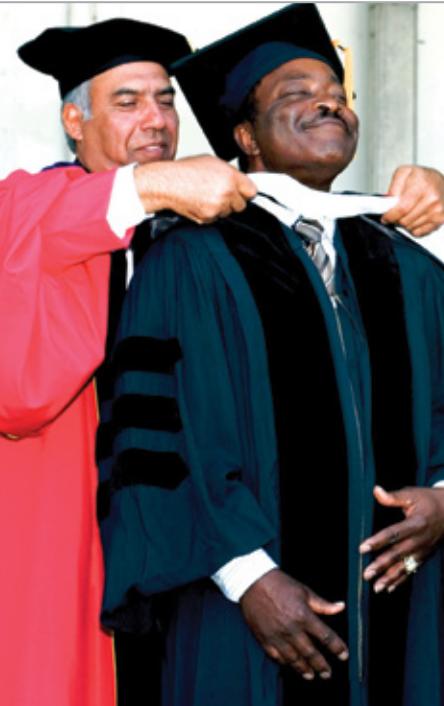
Beginning in 1963, Morgan's career included stints with the Houston Astros, Cincinnati Reds, San Francisco Giants, Philadelphia Phillies and Oakland Athletics. He later became the voice of ESPN's "Sunday Night Baseball" broadcast alongside John Miller from 1990-2010.

Morgan's philanthropic partnership with the university began in 1984. Since then, 60 students have benefitted from the Joe Morgan Endowed Scholarship Fund. The university recognized Morgan with a Distinguished Alumni Award in 1998 and again with an honorary doctorate in 2008.

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

Among the recipients are nationally-certified athletic trainers, successful coaches, physical education teachers, physical therapists, fitness industry leaders and others.

Do you have memories of Joe Morgan you'd like to share with Cal State East Bay? Email [alumni@csueastbay.edu](mailto:alumni@csueastbay.edu).



(Top) Cal State East Bay Alumnus Joe Morgan is hooded by former university president Mohammad Qayumi. Morgan is remembered for his support of students and his work as an advocate for racial justice in sports and beyond.



## PARTING SHOT

Following a two-week quarantine, Cal State East Bay athletes have returned to practice following California's shelter-in-place orders. Due to continuing restrictions, athletes are kept in small groups and those who typically practice in the gym (volleyball, basketball) are now outside on the tennis courts. Each day, they must do a self-administered medical check and inform coaches of where they've been and who they've been in contact with. GARVIN TSO



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