Huge Thanks for Career Day at IAC

Media and internet giant IAC has been a major supporter of the Berkeley Community Fund since 2008, when one of its operating businesses established the Ask.com scholarship. IAC’s local executives reached out earlier this year and said they wanted to do more than provide scholarship funds. Three months later, IAC hosted a wonderful career preparation day for our scholars. The HR director, recruiters and company executives gave career advice, shared personal stories about their own career paths, and offered insider hiring tips on what employers look for in job candidates, resume writing, maintaining LinkedIn profiles and social media presence, and creating and controlling one’s personal brand. It was a special day for BCF scholars, who enjoyed meeting C-suite execs and were treated like VIPs.

27 scholars selected from over 100 applicants

The smiles were broad and plentiful at the Berkeley City Club on June 13, as the Berkeley Community Fund (BCF) welcomed twenty-seven graduating seniors from Berkeley High School into our High Hopes Scholarship Program. The recipients were selected from a pool of over 100 applicants, a number that grows every year as more learn about the program. Meeting these students and learning about their hard work, accomplishments and ambitions never fails to renew one’s faith in humanity. It is a joy to work with them and to provide additional opportunities to help them reach their full potential.

The evening’s keynote speaker, Dr. John Matsui, has seen first-hand how support- ing students who are first-generation to college, from underrepresented groups, and from low-income families makes a remarkable difference. He has made it his life’s work to “level the playing field for individuals who do not fit the historical profile of success” and to help them become leaders in their careers. A graduate of Berkeley High School, Merritt College, UC Berkeley and UC Santa Barbara, Dr. Matsui co-founded and is director of the Biology Scholars Program at UC Berkeley. The program has helped over 3,000 Cal students pursue and succeed in science–related careers since 1991 and is a model for similar programs across the country.

Dr. Matsui spoke of the importance of diversity on college campuses, especially in medical fields, to ensure that disparities of minority communities are addressed. He advised the scholars to remember their roots and to look for advocates who will genuinely help them succeed. The scholars did not have to look far – the room was filled with advocates, including the mentors who have volunteered to partner with them during the next four years to support them in staying on course to earn their degrees.

BCF is grateful for all the donors and mentors who are helping us open doors of opportunity to support each scholar’s success. With this new class, 110 Berkeley youth are active in our program, attending schools across the country. Over 90% of the scholars we’ve supported since 2008 have graduated or are persisting towards earning a bachelor’s degree, three times the national average for first generation and low-income youth!

Congratulations to our 2016 Graduates!

Yesenia Canada, 2012
BA, English
UCLA
Iris Casanova, 2010
BA, Latin American and Latino Studies
UC Santa Cruz
Jamila Espinosa, 2012
BA, Sociology and Latin American Studies
Pomona College
Leslie Gonzales, 2012
BA, Legal Studies and Anthropology
UC Santa Cruz
Jay Gupta, 2012
BS, Molecular and Cell Biology and Psychology
UC Berkeley
Raymok Ketema, 2011
BA, Philosophy and Black Studies
UC Santa Barbara
Marissa McMahan, 2012
BA, Africana Studies
Agnes Scott College
Christian Merino, 2011
BS, Physics
UC Berkeley
Juwan Rohan, 2012
BS, Psychology
Colorado College
Jose Saavedra, 2012
BS, Cognitive Science
UC Merced
Meagan Scott, 2012
BS, Psychology
St. Mary's College of California
Quan Tran, 2012
BS, Molecular and Cell Biology
UC Berkeley
Nancy Yu, 2012
BA, Public Health Policy
UC Irvine
Flora Ziprin, 2012
BS, Psychology
UC Berkeley
Behind the Scenes at BCF

Ann Marie Callegari, Mia Gittlen and Kad Smith join our Board of Directors

My twin sons Cole and Lucas just graduated from Berkeley High School and are off to UCLA and UNC in mid-August. Like their BHS classmates who comprise our group of new High Hopes Scholars, my boys are very much looking forward to their college adventure. I’m excited “name the price” competition for various college expense items). The day’s proceedings reminded me of the challenges BCF scholar faces, how that most are in the first generation in their family to go to college. The contrast my own sons, and the resources and experiences they are able to draw on, has been illuminating and will inspire and drive my work as BCF president in the year ahead. I look forward to it. I also look forward to working with our newest board members: Ann Marie Callegari, Mia Gittlen and Kad Smith. Each brings unique experience and diverse perspectives to BCF. Ann was first introduced to BCF through her son, Morris, who was a BCF scholar and inspiration for her return to UC Berkeley to complete her bachelor’s degree. Before joining the board, Ann, who is a supervisor in BUSO’s Office of Family Engagement and Equity, volunteered with BCF as a mentor and interviewer. Mia has a broad background in education, nonprofits and small business. A graduate of Berkeley High School, UC Berkeley and Harvard’s Graduate School of Education, she taught middle school for many years and is currently the staffer for the Berkeley Schools ExCELlence Program (BSEP) renewal campaign. Mia is well versed in student development and youth issues, capital campaign management, grant writing, government and public relations and small business management. I appreciate how Mia rallied the Berkeley business community around our work. Kad is also a Berkeley High School graduate who has packed significant experience into his young life. Some of you might know the University of San Francisco grad from his membership on the board of the Berkeley Democratic Club, the steering committee of Berkeley’s Climate Action Coalition, or Berkeley’s Community Health Commission. Kad also volunteers as a lead advisor to the Berkeley delegation of the highly respected YMCA Youth and Government Program. By day, he works for CompassPoint Nonprofit Services, where he’s involved in Cohort Leadership Programs.

I send enormous thanks to two wonderful long-time members who recently stepped off our board: Michael Traynor and Amrita Singhal each dedicated over nine years of service to our board, providing invaluable guidance and continuity while we changed our focus and direction. While we changed our focus and direction, we are able guidance and continuity from our board members and mentors, many board members and friends of BCF. During the past two summers, they’ve created and led engaging and highly practical transition-to-college workshops for our newest scholars. The upper classmen and alumni appreciated the opportunity to go full circle and start giving back to their community. They also find it intellectually and socially gratifying. As BCF alums Fatima Rodriguez-Ortiz observed, “It is beautiful to see how our organization has been growing, not only in numbers, but the relationships between students, mentors and BCF alumni scholars.”

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Fatima Rodriguez, BCF Alumna

Building a Network of New Leaders


Up on joining the BCF in the summer of 2014, our College Success Manager Lynn Walker was tasked with reaching out and getting to know the scholars in our program. One by one, she listened to their unique perspectives on their college experiences, heard their concerns, gave advice and connected them to resources and to one another. Lynn quickly realized what a powerful resource the scholars were in their own right and invited them to help plan BCF events and workshops. The collaboration has grown to include alumni scholars, mentors, many board members and friends of BCF. During the past two summers, they’ve created and led engaging and highly practical transition-to-college workshops for our newest scholars. The upper classmen and alumni appreciated the opportunity to go full circle and start giving back to their community. They also find it intellectually and socially gratifying. As BCF alumna Fatima Rodriguez-Ortiz observed, “It is beautiful to see how our organization has been growing, not only in numbers, but the relationships between students, mentors and BCF alumni scholars.”

Fatima, a recent graduate of UC Santa Cruz, has been working as a program assistant with BCF for the past few months and played a key role in organizing this year’s orientation. Fellow alumni and scholars Eric Jung, Pamela Rodriguez-Ortiz, Wessede Barrett, Sequoia Johnson, Omar Aguilar Martinez, Aida Maini, Thahir Elzah, and Monte Metal joined her, sharing the wisdom and knowledge that they gained from their unique experiences at public and private colleges across the country. Mentors Owen Austin, Jackie Leventhal, and Lee Dorado, along with board members Susie Goodin and Mia Gittlen also volunteered many hours to ensure this year’s workshops were a success. The team developed workshops such as “I Am Proud to Be,” which covered what it means to be a first generation college student, how to find communities of support on campus, how to self-advocate and how to overcome obstacles. “One Step Ahead” gave students an awareness of experiences in college that might cause them to question their values and strategies for managing such experiences in a safe and thoughtful way. “Creating a College Budget” taught perennially important skills through exercises that included a fun game that reinforced how to be intelligent about spending money.

New mentors joined the orientation, too, attending a workshop with their mentees that gave valuable advice on how to establish a good mentor/scholar relationship. They are planning more social events, such as the hike in Tilden Park led by BCF’s 2014 Benjamin Ide Wheeler recipient, mountainineer, and environmental scientist Dr. Arlene Blum.

Special thanks to Artist and Crafts- man, on art supply store on Shattuck Ave., for generously donating beautiful pen sets, sketchbooks and more at stylish as coffee prices at our orientation.