



## **SAN MATEO COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGES FOUNDATION**

Friday, February 28, 2025

# **The Foundation Newsletter**

## **Student Spotlight**

### **How Scholarships Helped Thuc Nguyen Overcome Life's Challenges**



For Thuc Nguyen, scholarships were more than just financial assistance—they were a lifeline that allowed her to stay in school despite facing housing insecurity and health challenges.

With scholarship support, including the Monterra Credit Union Scholarship, Thuc was able to focus on her studies and prepare for a career in education and legislation, where she hopes to advocate for equitable access to education. By easing financial burdens, donor-funded scholarships empower students like Thuc to overcome obstacles and achieve their dreams.

[\*\*See How Scholarships Changed Thuc's Life\*\*](#)

## **Donor Impact**

### **Turnstyle Thrift Shop – Vintage Finds That Fund Futures**



For over 60 years, Turnstyle Thrift Shop, operated by the Assistance League of San Mateo County, has supported students through scholarships at Cañada College, College of San Mateo, and Skyline College. Each year, proceeds from the thrift shop provide financial assistance to students facing economic barriers, helping them stay in school and achieve their educational goals.

Since its inception, the Turnstyle Scholarship Program has awarded thousands of dollars in scholarships, making higher education more accessible for local students. Last year, six students received \$3,050 each to support their academic journey, including Alina Lysak and Johanna Lopez from Cañada College, Lola Sullivan and Myesha Reed from College of San Mateo, and Erin Denny and Me Me Hlaing Oo from Skyline College.

*"Being a full-time student and a full-time parent is not easy, but this support makes it possible. I know I have the strength to succeed, and I'm excited for what's ahead." – Lola Sullivan, CSM Scholarship Recipient*

[Learn More About Supporting Student Scholarships](#)

## Alumni Spotlight

### From CSM to Harvard: Modesta Garcia's Legacy in Education

As a College of San Mateo alumna, Modesta Garcia has dedicated her career to shaping student success. After



earning her master's degree from Harvard University, she returned to CSM as a counselor and professor, where she has guided countless students on their academic journeys.

Throughout her 24-year career at College of San Mateo, Modesta championed equity and education, mentoring students based on her own personal experience. Her legacy includes the Garcia, Jimenez, Orozco, Trasvina Scholarship, which offers students a vote of confidence as they transfer to four-year institutions. Her impact extends far beyond CSM, inspiring students to dream big, pursue their goals, and pay it forward like she has.

[Join the SMCCC Alumni Network](#)

## Faculty & Staff Spotlight

### Alex Guiriba's Journey – From CSM Student to Student Advocate



Once a College of San Mateo student with uncertain prospects, Alex Guiriba found the mentorship and support that helped him succeed—eventually transferring to UC Berkeley and building a career in student services. Now, as CSM's Vice President of Student Services, Alex is dedicated to ensuring today's students receive the same guidance that shaped his own path.

For donors, Alex's story is a testament to the transformational power of education and the role of community support in student success. His journey from struggling student to college leader reflects the impact of investing in students, showing how financial and academic support can change lives.

[Support Students Through Payroll Giving](#)

## Foundation Spotlight



## Building a Stronger Foundation for Student Success



As part of the San Mateo County Community Colleges District's commitment to transparency and accountability, the Foundation's new Executive Director, Megan Barber Allende, and the **Board of Directors** are implementing District policies, deploying the Brown Act to govern bi-monthly meetings, updating outdated systems and processes, and employing foundation best practices throughout the organization.

We are also focusing on deepening our relationships with our stakeholders, leveraging our partnerships, increasing

our visibility, and demonstrating impact. Along with the Chancellor and the SMCCCD Board of Trustees, the Foundation intends to expand donor engagement, provide long-term funding, and align the Foundation efforts with the evolving needs of students and the community. Together we will create a world-class foundation that will remove financial barriers, support student success, and produce meaningful change in the lives of students and their families.

[Learn More About SMCCCD Transparency & Accountability](#)

## Upcoming Events

### Celebrate Student Success & Donor Impact



Join us for upcoming events that honor student achievement and the generosity of our community:

- **Skyline College President's Breakfast** – March 20 | Supports innovative faculty-led student programs
- **SMCCCD Retiree Luncheon** – April 1 | Recognizing retired faculty & the Retirees Scholarship Fund
- **Scholarship Award Ceremonies** – May 1, 9 & 16 | Celebrating scholarship recipients & donor impact

[Learn More About These Events](#)

## Follow on Social Media

*Stay connected with the Foundation! Follow us for updates and impact stories.*



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### Have news or stories to share?

Do you have an update, success story, or event you'd like to highlight in our Foundation newsletter? We'd love to feature it!

Email us at [foundation@smccd.edu](mailto:foundation@smccd.edu) to submit your news or event details.

Thank you for reading and for being part of our mission to support students and transform lives.



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COMMUNITY COLLEGES  
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