



President's Report to the PCCD Board of Trustees



June 13, 2023

Acting President Dr. Diana Bajrami



The Class of 2023 Celebrates In-Person for the First Time Since 2019

This year the College of Alameda's Class of 2023 celebrated Commencement and Transfer Events fully in-person for the first time since 2019. On May 18, 2023, 44 students participated in the College's Transfer Event. Students received gifts, a cupcake decorated with the name of their transfer schools and a special outdoor display of all of the schools that they are transferring to. CoA counselors **Maha Elaidy, Vivian**

Virkkila, and Student Accessibility Services Director **Rachel Goodwin** greeted students and their families. Each of the students rang a ceremonial bell as they departed the event.

At its May 26, 2023, Commencement Ceremony, the College conferred over 500 degrees and certificates. Fifty-four percent of this year's graduating class were the first in their families to graduate from college.

The youngest graduate was 16 years old and the eldest was 75 years old. Approximately 80 students, or 29% of the graduating class, were Alameda Unified School District (AUSD), including Alameda Science and Technology Institute alumni. In addition, 43 students, or 15% of graduates, were from Oakland Unified School District Alumni (OUSD).

The special keynote speaker was former Peralta Community College District Chancellor Dr. **Wise Edward Allen**, who began his career in higher education at College of Alameda over 50 years ago as a sociology professor. He also served as College of Alameda's Instructional Dean, and as the Vice President of Instruction prior to serving in other roles at PCCD.

The Class of 2023 Valedictorian was Ms. **Verlie Carmack Collins**, the President's Medallion Winner was Ms. **Juliette Breen**, and the Salutatorian was Mr. **Octavian Yuen**.

Pomp and Circumstance and the National Anthem were performed by the CoA Instrumental Ensemble Under the Direction of Music Professor **Glean Pearson**. The following individuals presented at the event: Interim Vice President of Student Services Dr. **Mildred Lewis**, PCCD Interim Chancellor Dr. **Jannett Jackson**, Academic Senate President **Jennifer Fowler**, Classified Senate **Louie Martirez y McFarland**, and Associated Students of College of Alameda President **Natay Myers**. The Presidential Address was given by Acting President Dr. **Diana Bajrami**.



*Ms. Verlie Carmack Collins
Valedictorian
CoA Class of 2023*

Valedictorian Ms. Verlie Carmack Collins is a passionate learner intent on understanding the nuances of our society as they affect African Americans and other people of color. These nuances are experienced through systemic racism, a system created and maintained to incorporate racial inequality in nearly every facet of life for people of color. It is her passion to understand this system, its history and its impact in our society. This passion drove her pursuit of multiple college/university degrees and other life experiences. A native of Pittsburgh, PA. Ms. Collins holds the following degrees: RN from Columbia Hospital School of Nursing, a BA in history and Black Studies from the University of Pittsburgh, a BSN and an MA in counseling psychology from Holy Names University in Oakland, CA, acupressure therapy, Acupressure Institute, Berkeley, CA, and most recently, she earned an Associate Degree in Apparel Design and Merchandising from the College of Alameda. She also served as a major in the Army Nurse Corp Reserves. An adventurous traveler, her personal journeys have taken her to five continents and many countries. In 2015, After a 29 year nursing career, Ms. Carmack Collins retired from Alta Bates Hospital in Berkeley.



*Ms. Juliette Breen
CoA President's Medallion
Award Winner & PCCD
Chancellor's Award Winner,
Class of 2023*

CoA President's Medallion Award Winner and PCCD Chancellor's Award Winner Ms. Juliette ("Ottie") Breen's time at Peralta has been both challenging and rewarding. She moved to the United States alone in 2019 and has worked a full time job through the college with a weekend job on the side. She has faced housing and food insecurity but maintained a near perfect GPA while taking upwards of 20 units some semesters. She is currently living on a small boat in the Bay Area where she plans to stay and continue her education. This scholarship will help her in her goal as she transfers to UC Berkeley as a student of Cognitive Science and Data Science. She is honored to have been awarded this scholarship and to have an education that gives her the tools to be a positive change in this world. In a letter of recommendation for the PCCD Chancellor's Award, one of her supporters says that "I believe that Ottie is an exceptional candidate for this scholarship. Her strengths in independence, resourcefulness, and hardworking nature make her an outstanding individual who will undoubtedly make a significant contribution to any field she chooses to pursue."



*Octavian Yuen
Salutatorian
CoA Class of 2023*

Salutatorian Octavian Yuen is just 16 years old and currently attending Encinal High School as a dual enrolled student at CoA. As he was heading into his Freshman year of high school during the challenges of online learning, he decided to make the most of his time and set a personal challenge for himself, to earn an associate degree in Computer Information Systems before graduating high school. Throughout his time at CoA, he had the privilege of growing and furthering his passion for technology, particularly through an independent study course with Computer Information Systems Chair, Anthony Villegas. Dual enrolling in college and high school classes taught him time management, and prioritization. Mr. Yuen has lived in Alameda all of his life. He remembers walking past CoA with his grandma when he was really young. He always joked and said that one day he would graduate from CoA. After high school, Mr. Yuen plans to pursue a major in Applied Math or Computer Engineering. This summer, he will be attending attend Stanford University's Summer Session. As he embarks on the next chapter of his educational journey and enjoys his senior year of high school, he carries with him the valuable lessons and life experiences gained at CoA. Mr. Yuen is deeply grateful for the support and guidance of his professors, friends, and family, especially his grandma, who has played a big role in his life, his achievements, and his accomplishments.



APIDA Celebrations Conclude with Food and Ceremonial Lion Dance

The East Bay Toishan Association, a nonprofit organization, located in Oakland Chinatown, performed a remarkable lion dance for students at CoA’s final Asian Pacific Islander Desi American (APIDA) event on May 16, 2023. Lions are symbolic of wisdom and power in various Asian culture, and the purpose of the lion dance is to bring good fortune. In addition to the lion dance, the East Bay Toishan Association also performed swordplay and Kungfu, which are part of traditional Chinese martial arts. Students enjoyed an instant noodle bar featuring flavors from different parts of Asia, including Korea, China, Japan, Indonesia, and Thailand.



Photo 1: President Natay Myers, ASBCC President Mazin Saeed, ASLC President Omolola Atolagbe, and PCCD Student Trustee Leesa Hogan pose at the SSSCC General Assembly in Long Beach, CA. on Saturday, April 1, 2023. Photo 2: PCCD colleges Associated Student Government representatives. Photo 3: ASCOA President Natay Myers, ASBCC President Mazin Saeed, ASLC President Omolola Atolagbe, and PCCD Student Trustee Leesa Hogan pose at the SSSCC General Assembly in Long Beach, CA. on Saturday, April 1, 2023.

CoA Students Attend Statewide Student Senate Assembly

College of Alameda students attended the Student Senate for California Community Colleges 27th General Assembly held from March 31, 2023, to April 2, 2023. Led by Ms. **Natalie Rodriguez**, student representatives **Natay Myers**, **Semeon Thomson**, and the Vice President of Programming **Junhao (Jay) Ma** attended the conference on behalf of the ASCOA.

During the convention, CoA representatives gathered with delegates from across California to provide recommendations on priority issues for the Board of Directors through a resolution process. While they did not participate in the 2023-24 SSSCC Board officer elections, participants said that they gained valuable experience, participated in various themed workshops, and networked with other student leaders, in order to learn how to better serve CoA students.

The mission of the College of Alameda is to serve the educational needs of its diverse community by providing comprehensive and flexible programs and resources to empower students to achieve their goals.

Workshops included discussions on the California Community Colleges budget process, leadership, and public transportation systems serving Colleges throughout the state.

ASCOA Vice President of Programing Junhao (Jay) Ma shared several personal observations about the value of the event to student government representatives.

“Through communication with community colleges in different regions, we learned about the various issues faced by different areas and provided solutions from different perspectives. Of all the topics covered, the workshop on leadership was the most appealing to me,” said Ma. “Over the past year, our team has been committed to reshaping the leadership of student organizations, helping students transition from online to on-campus learning. We believe that this convention had a significant impact on our student organization and community, enabling us to better represent and serve our peers. We thank the Student Senate for California Community Colleges for providing us with this opportunity and look forward to attending more events like this in the future.”



*Dr. Reza Majlesi
CoA STEM Dean*

CoA Welcomes Dr. Reza Majlesi as Dean of the STEM Division

Dr. Reza Majlesi has served CoA/PCCD in a variety of roles over the last 15 years. In addition to being a part-time and tenured biology faculty, Dr. Majlesi has served as chair of the Biology/Kinesiology cluster and as a member of different shared governance committees.

More recently, Dr. Majlesi has served as the interim dean of the CoA Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) Division and in this role he has collaborated with student services and the Puente/Accesso program to address inequalities in the field of STEM.

In each of these roles, he has demonstrated dedication to academic excellence, commitment to equitable student success, and a commitment to STEM education. Dr. Majlesi is devoted to advancing the Guided Pathways work and working with faculty to ensure that the college offers innovative programs that will prepare students for success in STEM fields. Moreover, Dr. Majlesi is a strong advocate for diversity, inclusion, and accessibility, and is committed to continuing to serve COA/PCCD and our communities.



Christine Trowbridge, CoA's new MESA Connect Manager

New MESA Connect Manager Hired at CoA

With her extensive experience and remarkable capabilities, Ms. **Christine Trowbridge** brings a wealth of experience and expertise to her new role as MESA Connect Manager. Her dedication to supporting underrepresented students and her passion for fostering academic and career success make her an great addition to the CoA team. Her innovative ideas and commitment to student success will contribute to the growth and development of the MESA program.

Christine earned her Master of Education (M.Ed.), Education from San Francisco State University (SFSU) with an emphasis in Equity and Social Justice. As Program Coordinator for the SFSU Step to College (STC) Program from 2016 to 2021, she oversaw the dual enrollment of high school students and high school partner sites throughout the San Francisco Bay Area to college courses at San Francisco State. Christine most recently served as the Title V Grant Outreach Specialist at Berkeley City College.



Faculty and Staff Receive Training in First Aid/CPR/AED

CoA Faculty and Staff were invited to take a free Adult and Pediatric First Aid/CPR/AED class in April 2023 where they learned valuable lifesaving skills. The training was provided by [Marina Security Services](#).