



# STEP'S MAY NEWSLETTER



## In this newsletter:

### STEP Updates

Page 01

### Message from Coordinator

Page 02

### Staff Recognition

Page 03 & 04

### Scholar Recognition

Page 05 - 07

## STEPPING INTO A NEW ERA

The ongoing changes occurring worldwide due to the COVID-19 pandemic have caused many of us to change our routines. Everyone has entered a new era in their lives where online learning and interacting has become the expectation. The STEP team has arranged alternatives during this time to help scholars. Amongst these changes are the integration of online workshops, speaker series, and workshops. This past of April, step hosted four speakers from a variety of backgrounds to have discussions about diversity and resilience. STEP would like to thank Salih Muhammad, Lizbeth De La Cruz Santana, Dr. Liliana De La Paz, and Deborah Kang.

While many of us are experiencing a new era, we would also like to recognize all of our seniors who will be transitioning into a new journey in their lives. In this newsletter, we will highlight our STEP seniors and their accomplishments at UC Merced. We wish you all the best on your future endeavors.

# A MESSAGE FROM OUR PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Congratulations, you made it! You have reached the end of what has been an extraordinary semester. As difficult as it may have been or still may be, I want to extend my congratulations for coming so far. I know it has not been easy. As we look forward to an uncertain future, please remember the days you woke up when you didn't want to, completed your homework, took the time to get some fresh air, connecting with loved ones, and taking those small moments to focus on yourself. Those are the small wins that got you here and will carry you forward. You have shown time and time again that you can overcome all the challenges that come your way.

The end of an academic year marks a transition for many. This transition could be from academics to rest, or academics to work. For many this transition is usually marked with a physical marker, such as purchasing a cap and gown, crossing a stage, and receiving a diploma- a symbol of your hard earned education. I want to take this moment to recognize our STEP 2020 graduates. You all have worked tremendously to reach this point. You chose some time ago to follow the path of education at UC Merced. As you reflect on your time here, I hope you look back fondly with the wealth of knowledge you have gained. The campus community is very proud of you, including us here at the Bright Success Center and STEP. Although this is not the way we planned to celebrate you all, I look forward to the day we can all reunite for the well deserved ceremony you all should get. STEP will do our best to do so virtually during this time. So please keep a look out on our social media for senior content!

Though our time comes to an end for the 19-20 academic year, STEP will remain a resource for you all through out the summer. If you need assistance with interview preparation, resume feedback, tips on the job search, we can support! If you are taking academic courses and need some guidance in that area, we can support as well. Don't be shy, STEP is always an email away. Until then, stay safe, stay well, and enjoy your summer.





# STAFF RECOGNITION: BREANNA BELL



Lead student coordinator, Breanna Bell, joined the STEP team Spring 2018 with big aspirations for the program. She immediately took the lead on big projects. Breanna was known to coordinate the Student Optimum Success Series where she gave engaging presentations to STEP scholars every semester. Breanna's diligence and motivation helped her to become the lead student coordinator in Spring of 2019.

Breanna took on the role with flying colors. She was a great leader during her time with STEP. In the office, she did not only take lead in tracking scholars attendance and coordinating logistics, but she also always brought her bright spirits into the office. Breanna was great at mentoring students and was especially knowledgeable about preparing students for their intended careers through resume and goal development. Her hard work for the STEP program will definitely be missed and will forever be noticed in the years to come.

This May, Breanna will be graduating with a B.A. in Political Science. Her roles on campus as a member of the Black Student Union and as a Phi Alpha Delta brother have, with no doubt, prepared her for the future to come. Upon graduation, Breanna will be seeking to prepare her career as a defense attorney in Criminal Law. Breanna's involvement and hard work with STEP and as a campus member will never go unnoticed. You will be missed Breanna! Goodluck on your future endeavors.

# A MESSAGE TO BREANNA



**A huge congratulations to our wonderful Lead Student Coordinator, Breanna Bell, on graduating this semester. You have exemplified what it means to be kind, generous, intelligent and a leader. STEP has been very blessed to have you apart of our team for so long. I grateful that I have been able to work with you the last year! You are going to accomplish many great things in the world. Again, congratulations, enjoy this moment!**  
-Alex C.

Breanna, the work you have done for STEP goes unnoticed! You inspire me every day to be a leader like you and I have no doubt you will be successful in any career or path you choose to take. The future looks bright and I am excited to see the amazing things you accomplish! Good luck in your future endeavors where the wind may take you in life, thank you for being our Lead.  
-Jasmine Posada

**Breanna is an exemplary leader. She is one of the best Lead Fellows/Student Coordinators that I have worked with. Breanna is calculated, inspiring, creative, funny, and a motivator. I've seen the work she has put into this program and STEP will definitely miss her presence. Breanna is going to make an excellent lawyer and is going to do important things in her future career. Good Luck Breanna!**  
-ADT

Breanna, thank you for the hard work you put into our program. You have played a huge tole in establishing the foundations of STEP. Your hard work will never be forgotten. The skills and personality you carry will do you great as a lawyer and leader in any position you come across. Although we will miss you greatly, I can not wait to see the great things you'll do!  
-Melissa Macias

# SENIOR SCHOLARS



## KEANDRA FRANKLIN

Keandra Franklin joined STEP after hearing about the program from a classmate. Keandra stated:

"I would say STEP's field trips helped me gain more information for the career I want to do. In my second semester STEP took us to the UC Davis Medical Conference with STEP. That conference had over 80 medical schools and programs including some Ivy schools such as Columbia University, Yale, Harvard, Johns Hopkins etc. I got so much information at the conference and got to network with PA schools that I am interested in."

Some of Keandra's biggest accomplishments at UCM include:

"My biggest accomplishment during my time at UC Merced was getting my foot in the door at a hospital volunteering and eventually getting hired. Another good memory and accomplishment was creating a nutrition program for my capstone project in the city of Modesto."

After graduation, Keandra will go back to community college to complete science pre-requisites for Physician Assistant School.



## SIGRY ORTIZ FLORES

Sigry, a former Upward Bound scholar, joined STEP when she found out it was also a TRiO program. Sigry stated:

"The STEP Scholars program gave me the opportunity to explore different careers and graduate schools which was very enriching to my professional growth. I especially enjoyed the field trip to UCSF Medical School and having presentations from different career professionals!"

Some of Sigry's biggest accomplishments at UCM include:

"presenting the preliminary results of our study 'Food access information and nutrition education needs assessed by college student key-informants' at the Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior Annual Meeting (SNEB) and at the American Public Health Association Annual Meeting and Expo (APHA) in two different styles; a research poster and a PowerPoint in a roundtable. These experiences have been an honor because it is a testament of my hard work and dedication to this project."

Upon graduating, Sigry will be attending UC Irvine School of Medicine's Postbacc program where she will be continuing her journey to become a doctor to serve medically underserved families and provide culturally competent care.



## DARLENE MEDRANO

Darlene joined STEP after hearing about the program from her friend and student coordinator, Alexander Del Toro. Darlene joined because of the great workshops STEP offered. Darlene stated:

"STEP has helped me prepare for grad school and has helped me destress during finals."

Some of Darlene's biggest accomplishments at UCM include:

"Getting into and completing the UROC-H program."

After graduating, Darlene will be starting her Masters in Public Policy at UCLA in the fall.



## RICKY YAN

Ricky Yan joined STEP his freshman year with the intention of getting connections with upper class-men as a first-generation student. Ricky stated:

"Joining STEP is obviously the best choice I ever made in college. The STEP mentor helped me with anything thing I needed. For example, my former mentor Christian helped me revise my scholarship essays and personal statement that lead to many future success. He guided me through the campus job process and helped me land my first on-campus job after we did the mock interview."

Ricky's biggest accomplishments include:

"Getting my first campus job and getting into UROC my second year and getting into JGI my third year".

After graduating, Ricky will be attending graduate school with his former mentor.



## AHSAN LAKANI

Ahsan, a former Educational Talent Search scholar, joined STEP to receive support after attending community college. Ahsan stated that:

"STEP has assisted me by providing workshops, taking me to a conference, and through general snacks and printing services. Although the latter may seem small, it was actually extremely helpful as a student."

Some of Ahsan's biggest accomplishments at UCM include:

"One of my best memories is a surprise birthday party that was thrown for me while at UC Merced. It consisted of STEP, TRV, and UROC people and it was honestly a highlight of my college experience. I was extremely grateful for the time and effort that they put in and all of the friends that showed up for me. It was very humbling."

After graduating, Ahsan will be taking a gap year, potentially two, while volunteering on weekends and studying for standardized tests.



## HARMEET KALSI

Harmeet, a former STEP scholar graduated in Fall of 2019. Harmeet graduated with a Bachelors of Arts in Sociology.

This upcoming fall, Harmeet will be attending UCLA where she will be obtaining a PhD in Higher Education and Organizational Change.

# FALL 2019 ACADEMIC RECOGNITION

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE FOLLOWING SCHOLARS FOR RECEIVING BETWEEN A 3.0-3.5 GPA FOR THE FALL 2019 SEMESTER

Rose Andino  
Carlos Arroyo-Orellana  
Priscila Bacio  
Casandra Baucom  
Christine Brown  
Guadalupe Camacho-Garcia  
Patricia Casimiro  
Charlie Cerezo  
Milagro Chavez

Ashley Cortez  
Tania Diaz  
Heidi Felix  
Valerie Flores  
Meliza Gomez-Serna  
Jessica Hernandez  
Amarpreet Kaur  
Lovepreet Kaur  
Gabriel Llamas

Shaniqua Lujan  
Manuel Macias  
Daisy Medina  
Jaqueline Mendez  
Maria Mendiola  
Evelyn Morales Hernandez  
Nisha Nair  
Yendy Padilla-Hernandez  
Eddison Portillo Vasquez

Veronica Ramirez  
Jennifer Salamanca  
Alejandra Saucedo  
Dez'mier Smith  
Jacqueline Tejada  
Harriet Torres  
Yulissa Torres  
Nou Vang  
Kayla Williams  
Isabell Wu

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE FOLLOWING SCHOLARS FOR RECEIVING A 3.5 GPA OR HIGHER FOR THE FALL 2019 SEMESTER

Sydney Adams  
Jenifer Alvarado  
Kaila Anderson  
Monique Anguiano-Sandoval  
Jennifer Armenta  
Jeanette Batres  
Marisa Cervantes

Keila De La O  
Jose Garcia-Esparza  
Jennifer Garcia-Esparza  
Jennifer Grajeda  
Karen Guitierrez  
Ahsan Lakhani  
Jose Lopez

Johnson Luu  
Jallil Mancera  
Jhoaris Menjivar Recinos  
Andrea Molina  
Ariana Morales  
Terestita Ornelas  
Ayna Rejepova

Alondra Romero  
Jazmin Sandoval Bustamante  
Angel Thomas  
Michael Vang  
Tim Wu  
Daniella Yousif

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE FOLLOWING SCHOLAR FOR RECEIVING A 4.0

Kaitlyn Aldaz

THANK YOU ALL FOR AN AMAZING YEAR!

