



# Coming “Full Circle”—BCS Scholars Give Back to the BCS Community

Berkeley Community Scholars has been fortunate to see a number of our alumni return to the program to provide networking, service, and friendship to our current and alumni scholars.

**Alumni Create the BCS Alumni Association**—The Alumni Association was established by a group of BCS scholars in 2018 to create a space for alumni to support current and recently graduated scholars. The Association is led by the Alumni Council, Eric Jung (2011), Paola Alonso (2013), Cuca Gonzalez (2012), Colleen Sparks (2013), and Fatima Rodriguez-Ortiz (2010). Since its inception, the group has organized a fundraiser at Spats in Berkeley, raising nearly \$3,000 to support our programs, hosted annual picnics to welcome recent college graduates, hosted game nights for current scholars and alumni, and organized a “Clothing Closet” to provide professional clothing for scholars and alumni to use as they enter the early chapters of their career.

Earlier this year, the Alumni Council hosted a pilot workshop series for BCS upper-classmen and alumni. They brought in professionals to offer guidance on resume and cover letter writing, networking, personal branding, and interviewing skills. The Council is now brainstorming ways in



practices and accountability to our scholars. Eric and Paola both serve on the Program Committee.

**BCS Alumna becomes a Mentor**—Zulma Munoz (2009 BCS Scholar) is giving back to the community that supported her through college. Zulma, who was mentored by Judge Yvonne Gonzalez Rogers while in our program, received her B.A. in Sociology from UC Berkeley and J.D. from the University of San Francisco. This summer she became a mentor to one of our newest scholars, a young woman who is deeply committed to finding her way to law school and public service as an attorney, public defender, or judge. Seems like a perfect match!

which they can further support our scholars and recent college graduates in what will be a challenging job market. We are excited about the opportunity to grow this vibrant and energetic group.

**Two BCS Alumnae also joined the BCS Staff** upon completing their degree. Colleen Sparks (2013 BCS Scholar) joined the BCS staff as an intern and currently works as the Program and Marketing Assistant while pursuing her graduate degree. Fatima Rodriguez-Ortiz (2010 BCS Scholar) is one of the Community College Success Advisors. Other alumni support BCS as volunteers or contractors assisting on key program elements. Most recently, for example, Pamela Rodriguez-Ortiz (2015 BCS Scholar) worked on video production projects to help tell the BCS story. It is great to have our very own come back to support BCS.

**Two BCS Alumni joined our Board of Directors.** Eric Jung (2011 BCS Scholar) and Paola Alonso (2013 BCS Scholar) joined our board this year. They are the first alumni to serve on the board, and their perspective is critical. We appreciate their awareness of the daily issues facing our scholars, helping us to provide best

## BCS’s First Virtual Gala a Big Success!

“Fabulous, a giant gulp of fresh air!... Inspirational.”

Berkeley Community Scholars 2020 Annual Gala was held virtually this year due to COVID-19. While we missed gathering with our many colleagues, peers, and friends to celebrate our scholars and community members, the 25-minute event was as inspiring as every year. The Gala featured three current scholars and four alumni who shared their stories and highlighted BCS’s support as they navigated their college and early career journeys. If you weren’t able to tune in, you are invited to view it on our website at <https://berkeleyscholars.org/gala>.

**Thanks to the generosity of our Berkeley community, we raised over \$300,000, exceeding our \$250,000 goal!** We are hopeful this is the beginning of an unprecedented giving year in which our community comes together to raise the funds to support nearly 50 new students in 2021 while assisting the 150 scholars who are currently in our program. Our hearts are full of hope, justice, and good will as we continue to live robustly in these challenging and poignant times.

## What do BCS Scholars major in?

Our scholars select a wide array of majors. The larger the word, the more students are pursuing that major.





# BHS Class of '51 Celebrate the Granting of their 30th Scholarship



When celebrating their 50th reunion in 2001, the Berkeley High Class of 1951 was inspired to create an endowed college scholarship for Berkeley High graduating seniors. The early grants were small, one-time stipends given yearly to one or two students. When the Berkeley Community Fund (now Berkeley Community Scholars) created the High Hopes Scholarship Program, the Class of '51 suggested co-sponsoring a \$16,000 scholarship each year for one outstanding student.

This summer, 11 classmates welcomed the newest (and thirtieth!) Class of '51 Scholar, Mario Gonzalez Ramirez. But instead of gathering at the Women's Faculty Club for their annual luncheon with classmates and scholarship recipients, they gathered on Zoom, filling their computer screens and speakers with inter-generational conversation and laughter. Nan Andrews, Carole Allen, and Michael Traynor helped bring together their classmates who were eager to meet the Stanford-bound scholar. Mario spoke about his biochemistry studies, what he looks forward to at college, and his various career interests. Previous Class of

'51 scholarship recipients Eric Jung (2011) and Quan Tran (2012) also joined to provide updates on their personal and professional lives. Class of '51 High Hopes Scholars are an accomplished group who have attended universities all over the United States: UCs, Barnard, Columbia, Northwestern, Wellesley, and private colleges throughout California. Some have pursued Master's degrees, PhDs, and MDs. They have gone on to forge careers in journalism, academia, medicine, environmental science, law enforcement, finance, architecture, and filmmaking. All are giving back to their communities and society in significant ways. Mario has now made a strong connection and will begin to enjoy his networking opportunities to help support him through his college journey!



## BCS Board & Staff

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## New Board Members

### Marcus Ison



**A native of the Bay Area,** Marcus went to high school in Berkeley and received his B.S. from University of California, Berkeley. Currently he is working at a startup company, Roostify, serving as their Senior Director of Audit and Risk Management. Before joining Roostify he was at Bank of America and Bank of America Merrill Lynch where he last served as a Vice President for Business Control Specialist. We are excited to have him join our board and provide a fresh perspective to our members and scholars.

### Ursula Rodriguez



**Ursula Rodriguez joins** Berkeley Community Scholars with over 15 years of experience in educational settings in underserved communities. She has served as an Art Educator, Lead Teacher, and Dean of Students with the Knowledge is Power Program and Aspire Public Schools. After graduating from the University of California, Berkeley with a B.A. in Sociology, she obtained an Ed.M from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Her career in education grew from a desire to understand diverse learning styles and a conviction that all students can learn.

## SCHOLAR SPOTLIGHT

# Asha Byrd (2017), UC Santa Cruz

This summer when Asha Byrd learned she would have to take her economics exam through ProctorU, an at-home test monitoring service, she was worried. Due to remote learning, this new method of test taking was implemented in her class. She knew that disruptions, noises from the test environment, or even looking away from the exam on her screen could lead to failure. Learning from home, in a small one bedroom apartment with her family and sharing a room with her sister, how would she be able to prevent this scenario?

Because of Asha's drive and ability to tap into the BCS support systems, solutions came quickly. "I reached out to Lynn [Walker, College Success Manager] at BCS, and she made me feel like I was her priority," Asha says. "I feel extremely fortunate that I was allowed



to use the BCS office space to take my exam. Lynn gave me the resources I needed to take the exam and helped me feel important." Fast forward to this fall, Asha is in her third year at UC Santa Cruz and settled into her major, Business Management

Economics. She now lives in a quiet studio apartment with two foster kittens. "Having my own space has made a world of difference in my ability to focus and perform at my very best academically," says Asha. BCS also connected Asha to a paid internship this summer

at SEP, a private equity firm. "I found out about the opportunity through my BCS College Advisor and one of the BCS mentors, Stephanie McKown. It was an extremely new experience for me, and I learned so much about time management, organizational skills, and communication," she says. During her senior year at Berkeley High, Asha was discouraged from taking math. Today, she is loving her math-heavy major, Business Management Economics with a minor in Statistics. She loves the rigor of her major and the ability to apply concrete evidence to solving problems. Asha's talent and readiness to jump on opportunities will take her far. Today instead of worrying about her housing, her exams, and her future goals, she is now a finalist in a competitive internship with First Republic. We can't wait to see what she will do next!

## Meet Terrance Powell



**BCS welcomes Terrance Powell as** our newest Community College Success Advisor. Terrance received his B.A. at CSU Chico, where he also worked with the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP). This sparked his interest in youth development and advising. After graduation, Terrance served in the Peace Corps as an English teacher in Indonesia. For two years he lived in Pace, a village on the East Java Island, where he provided workshops, English clubs, and led a library project that provided books—varying from science, history, and literature—from U.S. schools. Terrance also helped his students apply for scholar-

ships and encouraged their dreams of a college education. His support paid off, for several of his students successfully enrolled in college. This experience strengthened his desire to pursue a career in academic advising. Terrance believes advisors "can impart indelible lessons, influence decisions and behaviors, while sparking imagination." He aims to ensure that the college journey ends in success for all the scholars he supports in BCS' community college program.

## Emergency Fund & Finish Line Fund

**As the triple pandemic of COVID-19, the** economic shutdown, and a reckoning with racism unfolded this year, our scholars faced even more immediate and urgent obstacles that threatened to derail their education. Many scholars and their parents lost jobs and faced the prospect of not being able to pay for rent, utilities, and education costs. BCS moved quickly to create an Emergency Fund to support students in need, and has granted over \$25,000 to our scholars, providing a lifeline to cover these expenses. BCS is also helping student success through our Finish Line Fund, created in 2015, to help scholars who need more time to complete their degree and have exhausted their original scholarship grant. The fund gives scholars the ability to enroll in missing required classes. It also gives students the opportunity to participate in a program or class that would enhance their preparedness for a job or graduate school, add a major or minor, or take summer classes. A few students have used it to travel to a foreign country to broaden their skillset and perspective.