



**Foothill-De Anza Retirees Association (FODARA) Scholarship
June 2023 Recipients – 4 @ \$1,000 (2 at each campus)**



Miguel – Foothill

Major: Biology for Transfer

My Story:

If there is one thing that I'd say defines me, it is my desire to help others. I've always felt that my future career should have some sort of impact on people's lives. What form that would take I wasn't sure but my experience volunteering as a tutor over the pandemic helped me figure it out. I want to work in education. Through the first half of the pandemic, I happily spent a lot of time helping my three younger brothers (ages 14, 12, and 7 respectively) with their math and English homework. I enjoyed doing it but over time they asked me for it less frequently. In March, I learned about "Smash High", a local non-profit that was looking for high school volunteers to tutor underprivileged kids in the Bay Area. I enjoyed helping my brothers over the course of the year, so I jumped at the opportunity to do so for someone else. As the oldest brother, when I needed help I didn't have anyone to turn to at home, so I spent a lot of time trying to figure out difficult material and any questions I had on my own. I can attest that it's not easy. I felt if I could be that person a student turns to for help outside of school it would be satisfying and I signed up feeling both excited and nervous.

I met with my student twice a week over the course of 3 months and found so much in common with him. The both of us were older brothers living in a chaotic household full of younger siblings. I know the struggle that comes with an environment like that and how difficult it is to work at home. So many times I've found that when at home, homework that would usually breeze through, takes almost double the time to complete. And as the oldest, when you're home your attention is always split between your work and your siblings. I felt a connection with him there and so with the backdrop of screaming and laughing children, we got to work. He had fallen behind in math so we focused on the concepts he was currently learning. I watched him improve by leaps and bounds and as he got better I felt myself growing more and more fulfilled. Being able to positively impact someone's life through education opened a new world to me.

Through my time at the foothill, I hope to network and make connections with people with whom we can mutually help each other along our life paths. In my two years here I intend to enrich my mind with knowledge and equip myself with the skills to thrive in a 4-year institution and post-grad education. I want my life to have implications bigger than mine. I want to be a part of something that will be remembered and have an impact on the world. I could see myself working to create programs for first-gen students in underprivileged areas. That would support them in their education, finances, and life while providing them with mentorship. I want to make sure no first-gen student ever feels alone as I did.

A challenge in my life that I've seen create the most struggles and stress has been my family's lack of money while living in an expensive part of California. Rents are very high, and as a result, we've always lived in crowded spaces. My first memories are from our time living in a small little shack in the back of my aunt's house. We've always had to share our living space with relatives. My whole life with no space to myself made it difficult to

We live in a 2 bedroom apartment filled with our family of 6, along with our cousin. My parents are in one room, while my three brothers and I live in the other room in a very military barracks-*Esque*-style room with bunk beds. The house was always loud and distracting. Along with this as the oldest of 4, I was often given responsibilities at home that got in the way of my homework. It's tough to focus on homework when you constantly have to be looking out for your brother's every want and need. As my homework in high school grew increasingly complex and confusing my ability to focus at home deteriorated. For the most part throughout high school, it was tough. Especially my senior year. The library closed pretty soon after class so I had to do the majority of my work at home. Not to mention I was working at the time along with applying to colleges and scholarships. So I had no choice but to just put my head down and focus. Trying my hardest to remain on task and blocking out distractions. It was tough at times and it definitely got in the way, not to mention I had to often work from my bed or couch in awkward sitting positions because of the lack of space. I made it through high school with good grades, but once I got to Foothill I felt I had to do things differently. Throughout my senior year, I applied for many scholarships and thankfully had the honor of being a recipient of a couple. The scholarship money I've won has allowed me to stop working and focus entirely on being a full-time student. A blessing I have not taken for granted. With afternoons and weekends freed up, I made it a goal from the beginning of the quarter to overcome the living arrangement situation. I couldn't let it affect my work anymore so I stayed after class in the library every day, staying in the library for hours after school and finishing my homework in a calm quiet environment where I can really give my all to the task in front of me.

As I stated above so far I've been able to focus my undivided attention on school and homework, however financially there are many supplies I need sometimes among other living expenses and as I am not working, I have had to ask my parents for help. That is how a scholarship would help me greatly. I would not only be able to maintain my focus entirely on school instead of finding a job that takes up my afternoon and weekend study time. It would also relieve my parents' financial burden as well. Giving myself a small amount of financial freedom through scholarships to focus on school is crucial to my academic future.

Thank you:

Dear Foothill-De Anza Retirement Association,

Thank you so much for the honor of being chosen as a recipient of the FHDA Retirees Association Scholarship. My name is Miguel Fuentes and I'm currently in my third quarter here at Foothill, I graduated from Los Altos High School last year and coming to foothill was the best decision I've made in my life so far. I have met so many amazing people in my time here so far through the Puente Club and Puente Program. I have also begun coming out of my shell thanks to my job as a student ambassador for the outreach department. As I am finishing my first year at Foothill I am beginning to look ahead to next year when I hope to apply for transfer to a 4-year university. This scholarship will have a huge impact on my ability to get into my dream school of UCLA. With this scholarship and others that I have won I will be

able to continue focusing solely on my academics and not worry about my financial situation. I will be able to continue my academic success thanks to your generous donations. Once I graduate with a degree in biology plan to dedicate my career and life to researching and furthering the biological sciences to benefit mankind while also teaching others. Once again from the bottom of my heart, thank you so much for this award.

Sincerely Miguel Fuentes

David – Foothill

Major: Studio Arts for Transfer

My Story:



I'm sure everyone's story is unique. My story starts in Pennsylvania in 1960 when I was born. My father deserted my family and my mother was an alcoholic. We moved around a lot and things were not good. I ran away from home in the 8th grade and was sent to juvenile hall. Upon release I ran away again and never went home again. I hitchhiked from Florida to California when I was 17 and have been here ever since. I ended up doing the best I could and found myself addicted to drugs and doing Petty crimes, to survive.. I ended up in prison and collectively did 10 years in several of the state's penitentiaries. I felt like I was going to die and so in the last ditch effort I went to The Delancey Street Foundation. I stayed there 3 years and graduated successfully. It's hard to put into words the self-respect and accountability they're instilled in me.

In the last 21 years I've not had so much as a traffic ticket and it remains sober and I'm a productive member of society. It has always bothered me to not have an education. I received my GED in Folsom prison and after working for a number of years decided to go back to school to get my degree. I started at City College of San Francisco and was interrupted when I was diagnosed with AIDS and had to be hospitalized for the better part of two years on and off. I recovered and today I'm healthy and hopeful and in sound mind.

I enrolled at Foothill College at the advice of a friend of mine who had graduated successfully in the fall of last year with the long range goal to transfer to the U.C. system with a major in Art. My work that I've done at Foothill has made me extremely proud of. I carry a GPA of 3.9. I networked with the underground scholars at Berkeley and have a transfer coordinator there. I'm completing my necessary transfer requirements this year and it's my hope to eventually get a Bachelor of Arts. I am passionate about Art and eventually work curating, substitute teaching, and representing unrepresented artists

from the community. During the course of my life I basically had to educate myself and depend on myself for just about everything. Instead of leaving me isolated and dependent I found out I really like people and can relate to a diverse population. People are like treasures, everyone is valuable. I have consistently received straight A's at Foothill and intend to transfer with a 4.0. I struggle financially daily. Balancing bills, medication and school needs is challenging. I am on academic probation for a maximum time frame but have, and will, manage that successfully. In my journey to get an education I attended school on and off around life's problems and it's taken me longer because of where I started from. I ended up amassing too many credits so for the spring and winter semesters leading up to my transfer I'm on a very strict schedule. I have worked it out with a counselor and The Financial Aid Department.. My living situation is stable but poor. Basic necessities are a challenge. I've worked so hard in my life to live my life as a decent person, taking responsibility for my mistakes but more importantly , not repeating them. Completing my education means everything to me.

To the Foothill-De Anza Retirement Association,

I am writing this letter to the Foothill – De Anza Retirement Association to express my sincere gratitude for choosing me as this years scholarship winner. I have worked so hard for years to get to this point in my life and your validation means a great deal to me. There have been times when I have thought about giving up on my dream of being a college graduate but it is determination and support from kind and thoughtful people like yourselves that have helped me persevere and succeed. I just want you to know that this scholarship will fill some very necessary needs, and it truly makes a difference. I am proud and grateful to accept the Foothill Retirees Association Scholarship.

My plans for the future are to transfer to a four year university after completing the last two required classes I have remaining, and major in Art, Studio Art. I am fortunate that through this life I have been able to maintain my belief in the goodness of man and the benefit of creating things that bring others beauty and peace. In the future I intend to organize and create a network of California artists with the goal of bringing their works and people in the community together. There is so much creative talent here at home and such a need for positive influences in our communities, The impact of Art cannot be underestimated as a way of communicating ideas across cultures and finding common ground to serve as a focal point for positive interactions. I believe people are our greatest resource and that collectively can achieve great things. Education is paramount to this process and if it was not for people such as yourselves that provide help to those who are working towards that idea, success and completion would be less obtainable.

I want you to know how much I appreciate this and how it will help ease financial worries and concerns, that I have presently allowing me to focus on my education. Thank you.

Sincerely,

David Brantly

Lily – De Anza

Major: Business Admin for Transfer



My Story:

I moved to the United States in 2018 with my family. As Vietnamese immigrants who did not attend college in the States, my parents could not offer me much help with the college navigation process. Furthermore, I started college in the midst of the pandemic, with all resources moving online making it even more convoluting to navigate. My older brother, due to his personal issues, could not offer me assistance with the challenges in college either, so it was up to myself and myself only to do well in college, transfer to an esteemed university, and get a well-paying job to change the living situation for my family for the better and fulfill my parents' dreams. As excited as I was for my new life in America, it was a great deal of pressure to put on the shoulders of an 18-year-old.

My goal is to become a successful business professional that could use the skills and knowledge I have learned in class to improve my community, especially that of immigrants or first-generation students. I wanted to lower whatever structural barriers there are for people like me in a collegiate environment, so I started on campus. During my time at the De Anza Guided Pathways Villages, I organized and hosted in-person and online events in order to facilitate connections between students and campus resources, clubs and programs, counselors, faculty members, or other like-minded peers. Seeing my peers' faces lit up when they heard of an interesting program that they never knew existed, a major that was more suited for their goals, or a campus resource that they were in dire need of, empowered me to continue giving back to the community. Next, I applied to become a peer tutor at the Student Success Center so that I could help my peers thrive in an academic setting using the knowledge that I have gathered from my business and accounting courses. Lastly, to familiarize myself with the work in the business field, I applied for an accounting internship at a mid-sized cybersecurity firm in my sophomore year and landed the job, becoming one of the youngest interns at the firm and erasing the stigma around community college students within the company.

As a full-time student who also works two jobs and an internship on the side, though rewarding, it can be extremely challenging to manage my time effectively. Being a daughter of an immigrant family means I have to help around the house with the cooking, cleaning, and managing the finances so that we do not go over budget as well. With all of these responsibilities, I can never have a minute for myself, and sometimes it feels like I'm not allowed to either. My parents left everything behind to bring us to the States for a better education, even if that means they are barely making ends meet here. As a result, I have to make sure to excel in my studies and earn lots of money to repay them, essentially promising them a good life like the one they have given me. Patriarchal values also come into play regarding my distress since these expectations were not bestowed upon my older brother at all, so it has fallen upon me to shoulder the familial duties, immigrant's guilt, and the self-criticism for sometimes wanting to live for myself a bit.

Despite the many hardships being presented to me as a first-generation college student, I believe that I am on the right track to success with the opportunities that De Anza has presented to me. With confidence, compassion, and persistence, I am happy to have made an impact on the community that I hold near and dear to my heart, while being excited for what the future holds. I'm grateful for the opportunity to reflect upon my journey and present my story as an immigrant and a lifelong student passionate about the study of business.

To the Donors of the Retirees Association Scholarship,

No words could express my utmost gratitude for the chance of being a recipient of this De Anza Retirees Scholarship, but I'll try. I thank you all so much for your generous donation and for your dedication towards higher education in the community. With additional tuition and rent now that I'll be moving out soon, we have been living on the edge for the past few weeks, not knowing whether or not we could pay for my new tuition. This award will truly lighten the financial burden that we are currently facing, and has instilled in me a greater sense of determination to succeed.

Allow me to walk you through my story. My name is Trong Uyen Phuong Tran, and I go by Lily for those that know me. I have been a Business Administration major with a focus on Accounting at De Anza College for the past 2 years. I will be getting my Associates Degrees in Business Administration, Accounting, and Economics this Saturday, and I will finish my undergraduate journey at the University of California, Berkeley for the next 2 years.

My family and I moved to the US a little over 4 years ago with not much to our name, just so that my brother and I could get a better education. I have found an awesome community here at De Anza – a community that is filled with selflessness and compassion, who I will miss dearly when I depart for the next steps in my academic journey. I will always be grateful for the doors that De Anza as well as this scholarship award have opened for me.

I will be getting my CPA after graduation and I might consider grad school as well. Wherever I go, I will forever carry your kindness and generosity in my heart, and I hope one day, I too will have the privilege to pay it forward and support aspiring students in achieving their dreams, just as you have done for me.

*With sincere appreciation and warm regards,
Lily*

Thomas – De Anza

Major: Economics

My Story:

A combination of inadequate educational preparation due to being incarcerated, a lack of discipline, former foster youth status, and unhealthy expectations created barriers that once completely deterred me from pursuing an undergraduate degree. I have overcome my obstacles and am on the path to educational success by utilizing the availability of resources, increasing work efficiency, and setting realistic expectations. Today, finances are still a roadblock toward success as a fully independent full-time student. Additionally, the current state of the economy has made matters worse as my previous role was impacted by company-wide layoffs.

As I set out to overcome my fear of school and my own educational inadequacy, I recognized my shortcomings and identified the means of resolving them. As a resourceful individual, I realized the availability of tutoring programs, financial aid, and counseling services at my community college. Through these resources, I have been able to maintain a high GPA with A's after a four-year educational hiatus due to the demands of employment and my past trouble with the law. Additionally, I have also utilized these programs to clear prerequisites and skip ahead.

Another key factor to overcome my educational barriers was the personalization of learning methods and time management. Knowing I was disorganized, I planned my days using timeblocks and establishing

reward systems. Being a full-time student and employee, I pushed for management approval to set blocks in my work calendar during important classes. After work, I set restrictions on my devices to avoid distractions and allowed myself to do whatever I chose after the timeblocks for homework and errands expired.

The most important factor was releasing unrealistic expectations. The worst thing I did to myself was scrolling through LinkedIn and comparing my failures to the successes of my peers. I realized that it was unreasonable to compare myself to people who had different circumstances in life, and to find gratitude and contentment in my own achievements, as long as I tried to the best of my abilities.

I am planning and am on track to transfer to a four-year university this fall, aiming to secure an undergraduate degree in economics. I believe that transferring will enable me to take advantage of the wealth of resources and opportunities that the institutions offer, help me achieve my career goals, such as product management, and business analysis, and also to pursue a deeper understanding of the subject matter and be able to have a more impactful role in the economy and society. I am confident that my resourcefulness, tenacity, and grit will help push me through any obstacle I may face in the coming years. The past few years in my life have been the toughest that I have ever faced, but I can always look back at the progress I made and continue to push forward.

Thank you:

Dear Donors,

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude for selecting me as a recipient of the FODARA Scholarship. The relative success of my educational journey thus far has been made possible by people like yourselves, whose generosity allows me and others of similar backgrounds to pursue academic goals and have the financial burden significantly reduced. Since I submitted my application earlier this year, I am glad to let you all know that I have been accepted and committed to UC Berkeley this fall! The funds from this scholarship will help me supplement the costs I have sustained to secure housing in the midst of a severe housing crisis in Berkeley. If I haven't mentioned already, I will be majoring in the study of Economics at Berkeley. In the future, I plan to leverage this degree to work as a business analyst or consultant. Once I develop sufficient corporate experience and gain enough capital, I plan to open my own businesses in the food and beverage industries, aiming at revitalizing local economies and providing another source of employment opportunities to those who may be in need. Before it is my time to leave the earth, I will have achieved my life's purpose if I could help just one person realize their potential and set them in the right direction to achieve their goals and dreams.