



PACIFIC OAKSSM
COLLEGE & CHILDREN'S SCHOOL
ALUMNI ASSOCIATION



FALL 2016

Newsletter

We have the power to create change in our world.



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Alumni,

As we begin our new academic year in the midst of election season, I am reminded of the courage and humility that it takes to become a good citizen of our world, to respect the unique potential in everyone, and to engage openly and respectfully with those whose perspective differs from their own. And, I am reminded that Pacific Oaks has been a community founded upon these ideas and on developing good citizens who have practiced them for more than 71 years. I am so very grateful to be part of this community. Thank you. We must all see that there is more to do.

Alumni Connections:

We have many new initiatives underway to connect with the outstanding alumni of Pacific Oaks College and Children's School. And, we have learned a lot from you on how best to do this. Based upon the data generated by the 2015 and 2016 college alumni surveys, the reinvigoration of our Alumni Association for both the College and Children's School was considered to be central to all outreach and alumni activities. The Alumni Association Kickoff took place on September 23 and also included a recognition of retiring faculty member Dr. ReGena Booze. The Grand Opening event for the San Jose campus was on September 29 and included an announcement of the Alumni Association for Northern California and the Gretchen Brooke Memorial Scholarship fund. At the request of our former Association members, Alumni Day will be reestablished and held in February 2017. This is an opportunity for College alumni to return to campus, attend classes, and become reacquainted with faculty.

The Children's School:

The Children's School is growing! Enrollment has increased to 204 this year; up from 158 in the 2015-16 school year. Bob Boyman, Interim Director of the Children's School, has led many tours and engaged prospective families during the summer resulting in a nearly fully enrolled school year. This year, the School will implement a literacy program, seek certification as an Outdoor Classroom Project demonstration site, and participate with six preschools in Pasadena in the "Professional Development Consortium." The Consortium's session on anti-bias curricula will be hosted at our Children's School.

The College:

A comprehensive review of the "PO pedagogy" is underway, with a goal to honor our historical roots and leverage our cultural values to assure that our pedagogy, program offerings, and outreach efforts continue to be as relevant to our world today as they have been in our past. Faculty began with the question, "What does the world today need from Pacific Oaks?" Desired outcomes include the reinvigoration of our statement of values, exploration and development of teaching and learning approaches to best serve our students and our learning goals, and a clear definition of cultural elements of the College needed to support those teaching and learning approaches. The task force is led by former Associate Dean for the School of Cultural and Family Psychology, Connie Destito, and includes faculty and staff.

I look forward to connecting with you this year at our events and, as always, please let me know if I may be of assistance.

Warm Regards,

Patricia A. Breen, Ph.D.
President, Pacific Oaks College & Children's School

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COLLEGE ALUMNUS HIGHLIGHT

Dr. Andrew Kami—M.A. Marriage and Family Therapy, Class of 2008



Tell me a little about what led to your decision to get a master's degree from Pacific Oaks.

Towards the end of my career in the marine corps I volunteered to become a Casualty Assistance Calls Officer (CACO). I would deliver flags and visit the families of fallen marines. It was a tough job, but I think that's what led me to want to take on that kind of career. When I was in the marine corps I began searching for psychology programs that would allow me to complete a master's degree while being in the military; I still had a number of years left on my contract. Pacific Oaks stood out because it allowed for a flexible, self-paced schedule. Even the decision to pursue psychology is a whole other thing. I was injured in Iraq and woke up in the hospital surrounded by people I had been in combat with. One person in particular had 90 degree burns all over his body and he just did not want to live anymore. A nurse asked him if there was anything she could do and he asked her to transcribe a letter to his wife. She would show up every day after her shift and write for him and I thought, what an amazing person she is to do this for him.

How has your perception of war evolved from when you were a U.S. Marine to your current role as a clinical psychologist?

This can be encompassed in one general sentence: the military tells you what and how to think, whereas, as a psychologist, I am instead asking people what they think. It is a hard transition, especially for veterans who spend their lives following directions.

What type of person is successful in your field?

When people ask me how I define success I say it's when I don't want anything more, when I'm happy. I tell my students that the first part to being a good a therapist is to focus on being a good person. When you're a good person, being a good therapist is just a side effect. It just happens. What does it mean to be a good person? There are four major components to that: knowing the difference between reacting and responding; continual self-reflection and an understanding that your actions impact others; acknowledging that while you can't change the whole world, you can change the world around you; and finally, you must recognize your own values and truths.

Who are your heroes in your field?

Dr. Dobbs, Dr. Rojas, Dr. Davis—my team. Dr. Dobbs and Dr. Rojas, they were my professors! Connie Destito, she used to run the MFT program. Being an orphan, when I graduated from Pacific Oaks I had no family to celebrate with. Connie and her friend took me out right afterwards to eat at P.F. Chang's. This is one of the few times I can honestly say that someone did something nice for me. It spoke volumes to the caring nature of people in this field and at the College.

What characteristics do the people who are most celebrated have in common with each other?

It's too easy to say they care. That doesn't quite capture just how much the professors here authentically think about their students.

What do you work toward in your free time?

I teach my classes, I have a private practice where I work with veterans, and I do neuropsychology assessments and lectures. I'm also writing a book chapter on the international treatment of schizophrenia, performing research on cognitive rehabilitation and remediation for people with executive functioning deficits, and developing software and games to help people fight against some of the natural aging that occurs in our brains. I don't have a lot of down time, but when I do I am watching baseball.

Tell me about a time when you were reminded of why you love what you do.

I am reminded of how lucky I am on a daily basis. I can't think of any way to describe what it's like to have someone say, "I wanted to kill myself yesterday and then you were here and I just realized that life is worth living." Just knowing that I can have some small impact on who they are, to help them find meaning in their emotions and their life, reminds me of how fortunate I am.

CHILDREN'S SCHOOL ALUMNUS HIGHLIGHT

Salim Coachman-Moore



As a young child at the Children's School in the mid-1990s, Solomon Salim Coachman-Moore rarely settled down in class, even for a minute. "When the other kids were napping, I was always doing something like drawing. I had a big imagination, even back then," laughed Coachman-Moore.

His parents discovered the Children's School through a mutual friend also participating in a babysitting co-op and decided to send their eldest child to the pre-school about which they kept hearing great things. Once enrolled, the Coachman-Moore family was so happy with their son's experience that they sent their younger children, twins Asha and Amir, to the school a few years later.

Coachman-Moore's fondest memories of the Children's School are playing in the worm bin and Bamboo Yard and eating mulberries. These fun activities were a perfect fit for an active, inquisitive child who was always seeking the "why" to new things that he was discovering each day.

"We had lots of freedom to express ourselves. We had story time every day where we would be reading books about all kinds of things," stated Coachman-Moore. Out of these stories, he assumed a temporary imaginary persona of an African-American billy goat replete with red cowboy boots.

"Our teachers were free spirits who were very accepting and encouraged us to express ourselves with no judgement," commented Coachman-Moore. Because of this posture, students felt free to be whomever they wanted with no gender bias.

Out of this freedom of expression, the students developed a keen sense of camaraderie and caring for one another. "We

were a tight group who took care of each other and valued the qualities of each child. The love and closeness I felt at the Children's School taught me about compassion and empathy toward others."

One of the best experiences at the Children's School was the field trips taken to the Rainbow Tree down in the Arroyo. Coachman-Moore loved the summers because each day the children were being exposed to a different place. The visits were sometimes followed by potluck lunches where they were exposed to a variety of ethnic foods. Coachman-Moore commented that this experience introduced him to different kinds of foods that he still loves today.

Science was taught not only in the classroom but also through discovery walks to the Arroyo. His first introduction to science came from these excursions where the children would explore and experience nature. "I used to come home with a few scratches, lots of dirt and some bugs," stated Coachman-Moore. These visits encouraged exploration, lots of questions and a lifelong appreciation for animals, vegetation preservation, and the environment.

Coachman-Moore's natural curiosity and creativeness were enhanced and nurtured by his experiences at the Children's School. Currently, as a graduate student at the School of the Art Institute in Chicago, he is forever grateful to this special school that placed such a high value on his active and creative mind. His career aspirations are to have his own studio practice, be a curator in a museum and to teach art within higher education. After his strong introduction to education as a toddler, Coachman-Moore is well on his way to achieving all of his dreams.

EVENTS

Pasadena Event

1 Debra Postil was a recent guest speaker at Pacific Oaks on September 9. Her ED Talk, Let's Rewrite the School-to-Prison Pipeline, was focused on the impact of childhood traumatic events and how schools and law enforcement need to change the question from, "What's wrong with this kid?" to "What happened to this kid?"

Last year Pacific Oaks College began hosting its own version of TED Talks, which came to be known in the community as ED Talks. Twice a month, faculty and staff convene to listen to short, powerful presentations on topics worth sharing with those who work in education.



If you are interested in hosting an ED Talk, we encourage you to contact us at alumni@pacificoaks.edu to learn more

San Jose Campus Events

2 **Hood and Capping Ceremony**
In May 2016, Pacific Oaks College, San Jose Campus had its first Hood and Capping Ceremony.

3 **Career Fair**
In August 2016, Pacific Oaks College, San Jose Campus hosted its first career fair.

4 **Reflective Teaching Class**
In HD 450, entitled Reflective Teaching class, students are creating stories to be shared among their cohort sisters.

5 **Week of the Young Child**
In April 2016, the San Jose Campus of Pacific Oaks College celebrated the Week of the Young Child. Many families, including some of the students, attended the event to see their children play. Each classroom had its own theme and children moved from classroom to classroom in search of different activities.



GIVING

Over the years, alumni and friends of Pacific Oaks College have been very generous in their support of student scholarships. In this issue, we are paying tribute to our wonderful donors by featuring testimony from students whose lives have been changed by scholarship donations.

Every gift to one of our scholarship funds is an investment in our students, our future, and the continued excellence of a Pacific Oaks education. To make a contribution, please complete and return the gift/pledge form on the following page. If you have received a scholarship from Pacific Oaks and would like to share your story, we would love to hear from you. Please send your story of no more than 200 words to alumni@pacificoaks.edu by Friday, January 6, 2017.

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During my course of study at Pacific Oaks College, I received several scholarships from various donors. As a student with limited income, these scholarships were an instrumental source of assistance for me. [They] helped me with books and other aspects of my education. I will forever be grateful to all those donors who supported me and made my education easier.

- Alice Edem, Class of 2014

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Without the scholarship I was given, it would have been more difficult for me to continue as a full-time student and reach my goal of obtaining my master's degree. I want PO's donors to know that even after the degree is achieved, the appreciation of students such as myself continues on. I am, and always will be, appreciative of having the funding available so that I could thrive within my educational journey. Thank you for your kindness and generosity. You are not forgotten.

- Michelle Parker, Class of 2015

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I want to thank the alumni for having the vision of paying it forward to the next and upcoming students that strive to become the next alumni who would give graciously as you have given. These are the values that were at the core of my family foundation growing up and I hold dear to values that impact lives in communities that may need a little assistance with grabbing hold of their 'boot straps.' Thank you for your financial support.

- Andrea Elam, Class of 2015

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When I began my journey in 2012, I knew I wanted to complete my education to better myself and help others. I had no idea how I was going to finance my education, nor did I know if I could keep up with my peers in the learning process. Throughout the three years I studied at Pacific Oaks, I was fortunate enough to be selected to receive a number of scholarships which helped me to realize nothing is impossible in life. We simply need to accept life challenges as learning experiences and live each and every day as if it were the last.

- Alice Cardenas, Class of 2015

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*Please fill out credit card information in "Payment Options" section above

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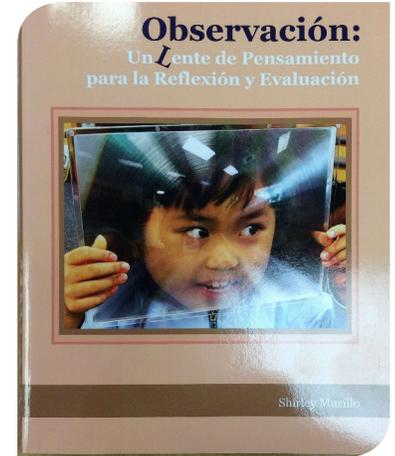
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ALUMNI UPDATES

Shirley Murillo, M.A. Human Development, Class of 2012

Shirley Murillo's career has taken her to UC Davis, Cosumnes River College in Sacramento County, and even New Zealand. In fact, it was Ms. Murillo's exposure to "Learning Stories," a widely used technique to assess children's learning in New Zealand's Te Whāriki early childhood curriculum, that inspired her new book, *Observation*. Published in January 2016, *Observation* was written with the goal to create more materials in Spanish and to expand the knowledge of providers, caregivers, and early childhood professionals in the Latina/o and Spanish-speaking community. The book focuses on how effective observation of children's learning can help support their development and education. Ms. Murillo's book is available for purchase on Amazon.



FACULTY UPDATES

Angel Hall, Ph.D.

Dr. Angel Hall was recently selected to be an ambassador for The National Association of African-American Studies and Affiliates (NAAAS). As an ambassador, she represents the organization at international conferences and directs international training programs. She also conducts site visits and familiarization tours to vet locations for future conferences here in the U.S. and abroad.

The NAAAS is an international organization that serves as a forum for the expression of research and artistic endeavors in the celebration of the lives and works of Africans, African Americans, Hispanic/Latino/Chicano, Native Americans and indigenous people, Asians, and Asian Americans.

The opportunity to become an ambassador for the organization came about unexpectedly. In February of this

year, Drs. Davis, Rojas, Estrada, and Hall were invited to present at the NAAAS national conference in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Their presentation, Fulfilling the Need: Preparing Mental Health Professionals to Effectively Work with African American and Latino/a Families, was well received and caught the attention of many attendees, including the executive director for the NAAAS. Hall was invited to apply for the ambassadorship. Out of 47 applicants, the committee recommended five for the position. Hall was among the five.

The next NAAAS National Conference will be held in Dallas, Texas from February 13-18, 2017. A very special guest will be hosted at the national conference: Ela Gandhi, Mahatma Gandhi's granddaughter! For more information, please visit the website: www.NAAAS.org.

Marilyn K. Simon, Ph.D.

Dr. Marilyn Simon's mission is to have her students at Pacific Oaks College enjoy math and understand that math is FUNdamental. Hailed by her students as a math professor extraordinaire, Simon has two principles by which she teaches: math should make sense; and mistakes are expected, inspected and respected.

How does Simon get her students to overcome math anxiety in a seven-week online course? Using the textbook only 20% of the time, she assigns problems regarding real life situations, has the students check answers and explain how they arrived at the answer they came up with, construct meaningful projects, and invites class members to help

each other when a person is struggling. Once students understand the problem, she then assigns a similar problem to convince learners they have mastered the concept and that they can do math.

In a short amount of time, students cover analytical reasoning, statistics, geometry, and algebra. During each course, students call her frequently where she mentors them on a one-on-one basis to help get them unstuck on a particular problem. "When a student has difficulty with a concept, he/she usually freezes and can't move forward. Providing a supportive environment helps them gain the confidence by figuring out the answer and moving on to another problem," stated Simon.

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Most of her students have had a love-hate relationship with math for a long time. "Most students enjoy math until the fourth grade. However, somewhere between the fourth and eighth grades, students start to hate math and that feeling

continues throughout the rest of their time in school." Simon helps students understand what went wrong and how to correct the situation. She serves as a math 'mediator' to help reconcile each student's relationship with math.

Simon integrates math into real life situations so her students have a frame of reference, understand the ubiquity of math, and aren't just memorizing concepts.

Simon also teaches online math courses at Colorado State and mentors doctoral students at Walden University and the University of Phoenix, School of Advanced Studies.



For information about membership, please visit <http://www.pacificoaks.edu/Alumni>

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