



# Board of Trustees Report



April 23, 2024

Dr. David M. Johnson, President



As the final stretch of the Spring 2024 semester approaches and we prepare for the frenzy that accompanies term paper deadlines, final exams, transcript requests, and graduation planning, I want to share with you the experiences that two students recently shared with me. Their stories serve as an inspiring reminder of the important work that we do and the impact we have on the lives of the students we serve.

Ms. Sabine Westerweck contacted me last week to “talk a little about how Merritt College has changed my life, specifically through the Natural History and Sustainability Program.” Describing herself as an “older student,” and having already earned a BS in Early Childhood Education, a minor in Psychology, a certificate in Interior Design, and her real estate license, Sabine found her way to our Natural History and Sustainability program. The experience of having “finally found a place and a group of people who believe strongly that we can make a difference in the world with our own actions and through continued learning,” has led her to pursue a certificate in Urban Agroecology. Even more amazing is the fact that her nineteen-year-old son, who is currently enrolled at Cal Poly Humboldt, is now looking to enroll at Merritt College next term because of his mother’s amazing experiences here.



Two weeks ago, Ms. Marcela Mobati, a student currently enrolled in LRNRE 501 (she has taken other courses across the District as well) attended the National Capitol Forum on Hispanic Higher Education (HACU) in Washington D.C. Marcela was there because she was selected to compete in a national “Pitch Competition,” which allows students to present ideas and advocate for policies in support of Hispanic Serving Institutions. To prepare for the contest, Marcela worked closely with our Learning Center Director Isela Gonzalez-Santana, and remarks were rooted in her experience as a first-generation Latina immigrant who has had to confront numerous challenges in her academic life. HSIs like Merritt College, she asserted, play a pivot role in helping student navigate and surmount these challenges. In addition to having the opportunity to meet other talented students, philanthropic leaders, and elected officials, I am thrilled to share that Marcela’s pitch was compelling enough to earn her top honors in the competition! And not only did she win the pitch competition, she also learned recently of her admission to UC Berkeley! Congratulations Marcela!!

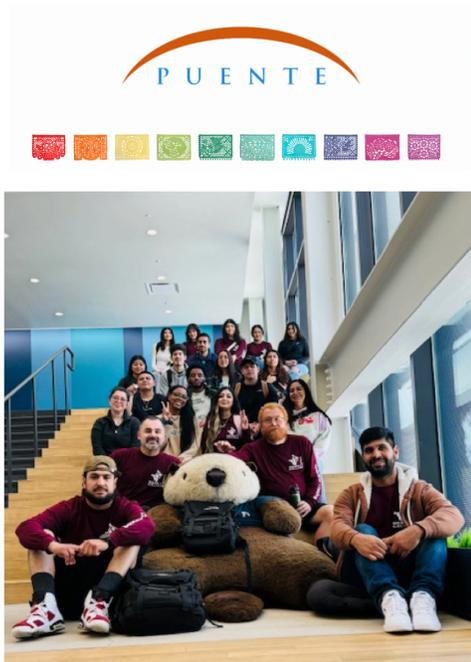
On Friday, April 12, Merritt College held a recognition and celebration event to mark the ten-year anniversary of our partnership with Silicon Valley executives and philanthropists Jim Cates and Mark Egan. These two leaders have worked closely with our faculty and administration to build and bolster our Cybersecurity program, and over the years they have donated over \$300K to the



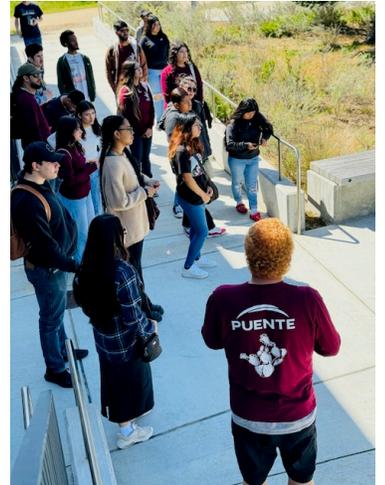
*Merritt College puts students first. Through our rich educational programs, we foster a culture of equity and inclusion that empowers students to achieve their greatest potential and make meaningful contributions to their respective communities and our global society.*



program through their industry CISE Foundation, which is a collaborative of Silicon Valley corporations. Jim and Mark, along with the late Professor Anita Black, obtained state approval for the first Associate of Science community college Cybersecurity degree, and since that time period over 3500 students have enrolled in our program. Moreover, Merritt students have consistently ranked in the top 5% in the National Cyber League games. The event was well attended by current and former students, faculty, friends and their family members, and we thank Jim and Mark again for their vision, generosity, and support.



Last week, students in our Puente Program at Merritt College had the opportunity to explore the vibrant campus of CSU Monterey Bay (CSUMB). The campus visit included presentations by Admissions, the Transfer Student Success Center, and CSUMB students. The Puente students also took a campus tour, had lunch at the Dining Commons, and visited several academic/major departments. The highlight of their visit was the time spent at El Centro (LatinX Student Success Center) They were warmly welcomed by staff members who shared insights into the Center's mission to support LatinX students academically, culturally, and socially. During the Transfer Student Success Center presentation Puente students heard firsthand student stories and experiences that served to inspire and motivate them to pursue their educational aspirations and transfer goals.



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