Meet the OHLONE COLLEGE EOPS CREW

Connect, engage, collaborate, and build a community with a crew of students and a team of professionals who authentically care.

Using characters is a fun, memorable and innovative way to tell a story or deliver a message. They appeal to people of diverse backgrounds.

The CREW, College Students Reaching for Education Working Together, characters in this book promote and capture the experiences of Ohlone College’s Extended Opportunity Programs & Services Program (EOPS) students. Additionally, their stories inspire hope, courage, and strength!

The EOPS program supports and equips students with knowledge and strategies to succeed in college, overcome barriers, and experience academic victory. Additionally, the program provides the space and freedom for students to learn — despite life’s challenges.

Education is the gift that keeps on giving! Therefore, start your educational journey with Ohlone College and join the EOPS family where you can “connect, engage, and succeed!”

About the EOPS Program

The Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS) Program strives to meet the educational needs of students who are hindered by language, social, and economic disadvantages. EOPS offers a menu of programs and services that facilitates the process of supporting students in achieving their academic, transfer, personal, and career goals.

The primary purpose of EOPS is to prepare students to complete a vocational certificate or associate degree, or transfer to a four-year university, which can lead to a rewarding career as a result of their educational experience. To achieve this objective, we provide academic counseling, and career planning advising.

The experience of connecting, engaging, collaborating and building a community with a crew of students, and a team of professionals who authentically care is life-changing.

Walking alongside EOPS students and guiding them through pathways that lead to academic success is Ohlone College’s mission, vision and goals.

The EOPS Motto is, “If students are doing it alone, they are doing it wrong.”

EOPS Services

- **Academic Advising**
  Students receive assistance with admissions, registration, financial aid, and the development of their educational plans.

- **Financial Assistance**
  Assistance is available for books and educational supplies.

- **Outreach Services**
  Recruitment services are available to high school and community agencies.

- **Early Registration**
  Students may register early each semester.

- **Transfer Services**
  Assistance with the transfer process is one of the highlights of our Program.
  Applications, fee waivers and other materials are available at our office.

- **Workshops**
  Informational sessions on various topics are offered throughout the academic year.
About the CARE Program

The Cooperative Agency Resources for Education (CARE) Program was established by Senate Bill 3103, in 1982, to assist EOP&S students who are single head of household, and recipients of CalWORKs, receiving cash aid.

The intent of this program is to lift families out of poverty by exposing them to educational opportunities to improve skills and increase their knowledge base on career choices. This would ultimately lead them to become employable and economically self-sufficient.

CARE Services

- Counseling Services
  Students receive assistance with admissions, registration, financial aid, and the development of their educational plans.

- Financial Assistance
  Provide assistance for books and educational supplies.

- Workshops
  Provide informational sessions on various topics throughout the academic year.

- Referral Services
  Provide assistance with referral to social services, housing, childcare, 211 a critical partner to national and local companies that are committed to improving lives.

- Support Groups (when needed)
  To remain connected, support groups are offered.

- Assistance with Social Services
  Provide assistance with helping students navigate the social services system.

About the CalWORKs Program

The California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) Program at Ohlone College encourages personal responsibility and accountability. It is committed to helping individuals receive an education and instruction that will provide employment opportunities.

CalWORKs promotes short-term training as well as life-long learning. The ultimate goal of the program is to assist CalWORKs students with vocational and educational training programs, which will lead to self-sufficiency. The CalWORKs program at Ohlone has been developed in partnership with the Alameda County Department of Social Services.

CalWORKs Services

- Academic Advising Services
  Assist students with the development of a County-approved educational plan.

- Career Advising
  Help students choose from a wide range of career choices.

- Lifting Families Out of Poverty Support
  Provide students with assistance, guidance and support while navigating through the social services system.

- Career Services
  Assist students with resume writing, internet job search, interview techniques and job placement, both on and off campus.
Music was my life. It was the air that filled my ears and submerged my heart in joy. Musical notes wrote stories of never-ending passion that filled my soul.

When I was 18 years old, I was one of many applicants accepted into the Music Conservatory in San Francisco. I dreamed of playing the violin in the symphony. Nine months into school, I was diagnosed with Ehlers-Danlos syndrome (EDS). This disease affects 1 in 5,000 – 10,000, and I was a victim of its aggressive destruction that caused me to go deaf within a year of being diagnosed. I felt like my life had been shattered, and everything I worked so hard to achieve up to this point had been thrown into an abyss of impossible.

The course of my life changed drastically from what I had planned. I slowly learned American Sign Language and struggled through the transition from a functioning hearing person to someone others avoided because I was different. I observed how people withdrew from having conversations or interacting with me because my deafness was a source of awkwardness to those who did not know how to communicate with me. I felt so alone and broken.

I was referred to Ohlone College because of its inclusive deaf community and extensive resources for accommodations and interpreters. It amazed me to feel included again and feel like I belonged to a community. I met Ms. Patty Jones, a PE instructor during my first semester. She always had a smile on her face when she saw me. She went out of her way to warmly greet and converse with me whenever she saw me. She inquired about my other classes. Often, she asked how I was doing and what support I needed.

One day, I shared with Ms. Jones that I missed music and wished there was a way to play the violin again. With the residual feeling that my dreams were over, Ms. Jones introduced me to Jack Peters, who was the Advisor for the Music Club. Jack invited me to my first club gathering, not knowing it would pivot my life back onto a path of a relentless never-ending joy of making music together.

One day, I sat at the bus stop crying, and a very nice lady walked up and asked if she could help me. I told her my situation, and she gave me information about Fremont Social Services. She said if I applied for CalWORKs, I could get cash assistance and food stamps. This was a new experience for me, but I was willing to do whatever was necessary to take care of my children. The next day, I went to the social services office and applied for CalWORKs. The entire process took about a month to complete. I couldn’t have been happier because my money was almost gone. Through that resource, I received housing assistance, cash benefits, food stamps, and healthcare.

Having independence and freedom to move through the world was something I had always desired, but this wasn’t what I envisioned. Because English is my second language, I needed to improve my communicaton and comprehension. Therefore, my CalWORKs Employment Counselor suggested I take a few ESL (English as Second Language Learner) classes at Ohlone College. Also, she referred me to an agency that could provide childcare assistance. I was relieved that Ohlone was within walking distance from my apartment. Everything seemed to be coming together.

On my first visit to the campus, I met some of the most helpful people who assisted me with registering and selecting classes. Because I am an English as a second language learner, I couldn’t have predicted the challenges I would encounter. Longing for the presence of my husband complicated things even further. Though he and I spoke often, I missed him! I cried for weeks. Every week, I hoped he would be allowed to return soon. But it didn’t happen.

Subsequently, I approach life with the mindset of attacking one day at a time, one problem at a time, and one class at a time.

After many years of being in the U.S alone with my children, I had learned so much and developed a tough skin. I was amazed at how far I had come. Once I completed all of the ESL courses, I decided to pursue an Associate Degree. I couldn’t believe I was succeeding in college! In 2020, my husband reunited with us, and I graduated with an Associate Degree in Sociology. Today, I support and assist other women in looking for their inner strength to move through life and accomplish extraordinary things!

Point to Ponder:
When life gives you a thousand reasons to give up, demonstrate that you have a thousand more purposes to never give up and to never give in.

Written by: Sandy Bennett
I was a smart kid with a big imagination and a dream of being an artist. I saw art in everything. If I stare at something long enough, I could see an artistic expression I felt was hidden from the world and privy only to me.

I come from a traditional Japanese culture where the expectations are very high to be successful. The definition of success was drawn out for me early in life by my parents. Success meant graduating from a good school and working for a brand named company. My dream of becoming an artist was buried within me as I knew it was an unacceptable path.

In high school, my grades were stellar, always achieving above and beyond to impress my parents and remain in their good graces. I graduated with honors and was accepted into Stanford University Business School. As a first-year college student, I struggled. In my first-year, receiving one B, two letter grade D, and I dropped a class, I attributed the provocation to the new experience and expectations in higher education. Although this rationale made sense to me, I kept my struggle a secret from my parents. I felt embarrassed and ashamed to ask for help from any of my professors and too proud to seek tutoring for additional support.

I made a friend on the first day of Business School. Her name was Samantha. We called her “Sammy.” One day, Sammy asked how I was doing? I looked overwhelmed and stressed out. She said, let’s grab a coffee after class. As I stared at my steaming cup of coffee silently, Sammy shared that she noticed I doodle a lot during class, and my doodles were beautiful. My eyes welled up, and I could not control the flood of tears that fell onto the table before me. I shared with her that I loved to draw and that I hated Business School.

I expressed my frustration with myself for not being able to catch onto business concepts and accounting principles like everyone else. I admitted I felt stupid, and I was a failure. After I poured out my heart in vulnerability, I will never forget what Sammy asked, “What do you dream of doing?” Sammy imparted a response that made me realize my passion was not business or working for a brand named company. My dream of succeed was to open my art studio, where artists could express themselves, share their creativity, and bring beauty to the world and privy only to me.

If I stare at something long enough, I could see an artistic expression I felt was hidden from the world and privy only to me.

The next day, Ms. Bell introduced me to the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) Instructor, Mr. Thomas. Because I was a female, I was confused as to why Ms. Bell took me to see him. With a perplexing look on my face, Mr. Thomas had to sense my bewilderment. Such as the case, he was excited to tell me that women had served in various roles of the military throughout history. He said that ROTC is one of the most successful leadership training programs in the country. The training I could receive would provide the tools I needed to help me become a better student, develop leadership abilities, military skills, and career preparation.

Before meeting Mr. Thomas, I felt hopeless. Shockingly, for the first time, I was excited about my future. Could I find my calling in the ROTC? Could this experience set me on a pathway that would give my life the discipline, structure, and direction I needed? The answer is a resounding YES! Because of Ms. Bell’s care, concern, and dedication to walk alongside me to help me find my way, I achieved something I never saw in my future. I graduated from high school and enrolled at Ohlone Community College. The transformation set in motion by two people, Ms. Bell and Mr. Thomas, who exceeded my expectations, will always remain etched in my heart.

One person can make a difference. “To make a difference in someone’s life, you don’t have to be brilliant, rich, beautiful, or perfect. You merely have to care enough and be available.”

Point to Ponder:
The power of hope and the will to chase a dream can transform a life in inexplicable ways.

Written by: Sandy Bennett
I don’t remember much after I hit the ground. When I awakened in the hospital, my sister was holding my hand with tears streaming down her face. In a faint voice, “don’t cry, sis, I said.  “You’re awake!”  She screamed, doctor, doctor, he is awake!  “Where am I”? I asked.  “You are in the hospital,” my sister said.  “How long have I been here?” Before she could answer, I realized I couldn’t feel my legs.  Looking at my sister with pure trepidation and trembling in my voice, “I can’t feel legs, I can’t feel my legs,” I shouted.  It would help if you remained calm, Pablo,” my sister said.  By this me, the doctor entered the room.

Officer Pablo, how are you feeling? “Doctor, I cannot feel my legs.” He explained that the surgery to remove the bullet went well. But, the penetration of the bullet caused massive damage to the spinal cord, which resulted in paralysis.

“Will it be permanent?” I asked.  “It could be six months to a year, each patient’s recovery is different. But, you are doing well, and I am optimistic.”

I remained in the hospital for a couple of months. My sister visited as often as she could. She was a single mother of six children. But, when she couldn’t be there, I was in the care of a lovely Nursing Assistant, Renita. She was a nursing student at Ohlone College. Renita ranted and raved about her school and the people who were helping and cheering her on. Listening to her talk about her encouraged me. I looked forward to her daily visits.

After a while, Nurse Renita and I became good friends. I enjoyed her company. One day, I decided to open up to her about my decision to leave the police force. It wasn’t something I was ready to do, but my recovery and healing would take time, so I needed to construct a plan and focus on my health. Confused about what the next steps would be, Renita suggested I go to college and pursue another career that allowed me to protect and serve differently. Honestly, it wasn’t something I had ever considered, but I was intrigued. Besides, how would I handle being the oldest person in class? When I expressed my apprehension, Renita said, “Officer Pablo, you are a brave and courageous fighter. If you can fight your way through learning to walk again and regaining control of your life, being in a classroom with traditional students is a piece of cake.” Also, she said, “this is your journey; don’t allow fear to hold you back.”

I began to feel something extraordinary for Renita, and I couldn’t imagine starting a new endeavor without her. One year later, I enrolled in Ohlone College and applied for EOPS. Because I was unsure of what career I wanted to pursue, my EOPS counselor recommended that I meet a career advisor to help me explore my options. I loved the fact that all of the departments and programs at Ohlone work together. It made things so much easier for me. After I settled into being a student, a year later nurse Renita and I got married. I moved from tragedy to triumph, and the Ohlone College EOPS and Career Center provided the assistance I needed to change my life.

Point to Ponder: New possibilities live within, but you must be brave enough to see and activate them, as multiple perspectives can change everything.

Written by: Sandy Bennett
Ohlone College Career Ventures (WIOA)

Enrolled students and community members may qualify for financial assistance towards internships, on-the-job training, and receive one-on-one assistance with a Career Advisor.

Ohlone College Alameda County Small Business Development Center (ACSBDC)

The Alameda County, Small Business Development Center (SBDC), provides expert one-on-one consulting, workshops and seminar series, business and financial planning support services to entrepreneurs, small businesses, and startups that are interested in starting, growing, and thriving in their business goals. Our team of business consultants come from a variety of high-growth industries and corporate backgrounds and work hands-on with clients and students/alumni to address challenges and to maximize opportunities.

Diversity @WORK

Diversity @Work provides individualized employment services to deaf, hard of hearing, and disabled job seekers with diverse backgrounds and abilities. In addition, staff are fluent in American Sign Language and trained in Deaf Culture.

Ohlone College Staffing

Ohlone College Staffing provides dedicated staffing agency resources that are catered to support Ohlone College students and the community at the Ohlone College Tri-Cities Career Center. Our services include job placement through paid internships, temporary employment, direct hire and gig opportunities. Staff is available to meet you during office hours or by appointment. Email: careercenter@ohlone.edu www.ohlone.edu/careercenter

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