Creating New Pathways to Lifelong Education and Gainful Employment

This year, CAA has made amazing strides in its new workforce development efforts and has been lucky to create new and impactful relationships with many of our community leaders. This initiative was spearheaded when Senator Dave Cortese came past in December on a tour of College of Adaptive Arts along with West Valley College President Stephanie Kashima, and a fabulous brainstorm ensued on possibilities for strengthening workforce partnerships and opportunities.

In early February, CAA leaders submitted an application to be a registered apprenticeship employer with the US Department of Labor. This was a lead from the West Valley College Dept of Continuing Education in conjunction with one of their workforce partners, IWSI under the leadership of Deborah Williamson. The goal of these new apprenticeship programs is that this will open the door to new, viable funding streams which will help CAA be a sustainable model which can be replicated on college campuses across the world.

CAA is proud to have several Associate Professors of Instruction (APIs) who have been hired from its student body and will continue building even more positions that will eventually lead to rich and fulfilling careers for our students. Thanks in big part to CAA Board Member Vickie Fairchild, CAA has gained the attention of several prominent government officials, including Senator Dave Cortese, Assemblymember Evan Low, and County Supervisor Joe Simitian, all who came to take a recent tour of the campus. They have all shown incredible support for CAA’s programs and were tremendously impressed by our students.

In March, CAA co-founder DeAnna Pursai was honored by Senator Dave Cortese as District 15’s “Woman of the Year” for the Women Making Herstory campaign. DeAnna travelled to the State Capitol to receive a special proclamation by Senator Cortese and the California Legislative Women’s Caucus honoring women throughout the state who have made significant contributions to their community. CAA was also selected as a Top 50 Finalist for the 2023 Classy Awards, which recognize groundbreaking organizations who are implementing new strategies, creative thinking, and innovative solutions to drive lasting impact worldwide.

We are now gearing up for our Gala in September and Golf Classic in October and hope those will be our biggest fundraisers yet. Our supporters are so important to CAA, and we couldn’t do all we do without your hard work and generosity. Please continue to help us advocate for those who historically haven’t had access to higher education, and together we will move mountains!
Professor Spotlight

Angel Gonzalez

Professor Angel Gonzalez has been a beloved CAA Superstaff member since 2017. He is a natural leader on the staff who has made such a tremendous positive impact to the CAA community. Angel began his career as a site manager and now is a Frontline Instructional Lead. He is teaching Sign Language and instructing in CAA classes such as Joy of Baking, Reading Partners, and Speaking with Confidence.

Additionally, Angel has forged a strong bond with CAA volunteer assistant golf coach, Steve Mayo, a legacy figure in the San Jose Golfing Community who CAA named last year’s Golf Classic in his honor. When Steve Mayo worked for Geared for Golf, he would open the store early to the CAA Golfers.

Angel was the recipient of a San Andreas Regional Center Educator Merit Award this past fall. Angel began his educational journey at San Jose City College where he learned about CAA through a fellow SJCC classmate who was affiliated with San Jose’s phenomenal PIVOTAL program supporting foster youth. Angel’s vocational career path is to continue his education completing his undergraduate degree at Santa Clara University in Business where he can use his knowledge to continue growing and improving processes at College of Adaptive Arts.

Leann Cherkasky Makhni has been a proud board member at CAA for 3 years and has been the CAA Board Chair since December 2022.

Leann is past Director of the International House (I-House) at San Jose State University (SJSU), where she worked for more than 30 years. The International House is home to U.S. and international students from around the world who attend SJSU.

During the pandemic, Leann got a deeper insight into CAA through a partnership and virtual program which was created in partnership with the SJSU Accessibility Education Center (AEC), SJSU Associated Students, the International House, and CAA.

She saw parallels to the community at CAA and the community at the I-House.

“I’m drawn to bringing the community together and trying to forge new partnerships,” said Leann. “I believe we grow by learning from each other; recognizing our unique differences but also seeing how much we really have in common.”

Intercultural training is a huge passion of Leann’s and she is driven by the enthusiasm, innovation and excitement when people of different backgrounds and cultures come together.

Leann completed her Undergraduate studies at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and earned her Master’s degree in International Policy Studies (IPS) at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies. She met her husband in Grad School and moved to San Jose shortly after.

Leann says that being a part of CAA is inspiring, and she enjoys volunteering alongside such a diverse, supportive group of people.

“CAA has given me so many opportunities to get involved in the community, leverage skills and build partnerships,” said Leann. “It’s incredible to be surrounded by so many people with positive, ‘Can-do’ attitudes.”

Leann loves spending time with her husband and two children and she enjoys gardening, reading, and travelling. Leann also serves as Scholarship Chair on the Board of San Jose/Dublin, Ireland Sister City program.
New Projects and Partnerships

by Dr. Pamela Lindsay, Co-Founder & Director of Research & Programs

Our students are flying high over new opportunities coming to campus! By popular demand, we’re proud to announce the launch of our Cardinal Apprenticeship Program (CAP). Pathway content through CAA’s School of Business classes will guide students toward goals of vocational skill-building and increased community contribution. Achievement of vendor status with the Department of Labor and support from the Institute for Workplace Skills and Innovation have informed development of training curricula and certificates for roles of Teaching Assistant and Receptionist. Also, through our amazing partnership with West Valley College, we are developing adjacent pathways for their student Vikings to join our mighty Cardinals in joyful and inclusive work toward credits and certificates in these vocational areas.

Another recent, inclusive collegiate partnership is the collaboration between CAA and the San Jose State Department of Business Honors (SJDBH) students on development of a brand-new informational catalog and general course green sheet. They have wholeheartedly embraced our organization while devoting much of the past year to the provision of resources and informational data benefitting current and future members of the CAA community. We are truly grateful for this rich and valuable project work with the SJDBH leaders, and the collaborative spirit of their student Spartans. This work included meeting with our fabulous Parent Advisory Council (PAC), gathering feedback on needs and impact data on the benefits of CAA participation. As always, we look to our student families to lead the way. We’re endlessly grateful to all who have attended PAC meetings, offering insights and ideas on multiple areas of programs assessment and planning. We encourage you to join our next meet-up, and to also provide your most valued input by clicking on the frequent short survey links posted in our Weekly Updates.

Giorgina Brackett

Giorgina Brackett has been a student at CAA since 2019, enjoying classes like Pound Fitness, US and World History, Art, Spanish, Italian, and Science. This year is the first time she is back on campus taking classes since the pandemic.

“It’s nice to be back in the classroom and see my friends and teachers,” Giorgina said.

One of the things that Giorgina is extremely proud of is her job working at Google, where she just earned her 5-year award. She got the job through Project Search and has an important role of working in the café and restocking the coffee areas and collecting dishes.

Another accomplishment which Giorgina is proud of is her involvement in the Special Olympics where she has received a Gold Medal in bowling and track and field.

On the weekends, Giorgina loves being active and getting out to the YMCA to work with her personal trainer. Her two favorite classes there are Body Pump and Yoga. She also enjoys cooking healthy foods like gnocchi and salad. Giorgina has participated in many CAA activities over the years which she enjoys and remembers a funny moment in pound fitness when one of the teachers hit the rip sticks so hard that they flew in the air and broke.

For Giorgina, CAA is like a second home. “I like learning new things and feel comfortable there”, said Georgina.
Thank you for making us a Top Rated Non Profit!

SAVE THE DATE

Celebrating Inclusive Collegiate Partnerships Gala
Sunday, September 17, 2:00 pm - 4:30 pm
West Valley College Campus Center

10th Annual CAA Golf Classic
Monday, October 16, 2:00 pm - 8:00 pm
Santa Teresa Golf Club

School of Communications Showcase
Saturday, October 21, 3:00 pm -5:30 pm
Together we are Moving Mountains
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CAA Student AJ presenting at the

Students enjoying a CAA Chemistry