



MERITUS CONNECTIONS

50 Scholarships Awarded at Annual Ceremony by Donald Andreini



An enthusiastic full house of family and friends greeted this year's Meritus Scholars at Fort Mason Center's Cowell Theater, on Tuesday evening, May 18. Beginning fourteen years ago, with the gathering of a small group of friends in a living room that led to funding a single scholarship, on this night, Meritus was presenting

fifty scholarships valued at \$12,000 each.

In welcoming everyone to the 2010 Awards Ceremony, Executive Director Diana Wolf noted that this year's awards represent the culmination of many months of reviewing applications and interviewing candidates. She paid tribute to those who contributed to the success of this year's scholars: families; teachers, counselors and principals; youth development leaders; and Meritus mentors, donors and funders.

Diana introduced the awards ceremony host, CBS 5 featured reporter, Kate Kelly. Ms. Kelly described the fifty scholars as prime examples of the drive and determination needed to succeed in college and in life. Underlining that observation, she said that Meritus scholars complete college at

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a rate four times the national average for their demographic.

Sara Quinto, 2000 Meritus alumna, as featured speaker, welcomed the scholars into the Meritus family. Sara received her college degree in 2004 from UC Berkeley, completed Hastings Law School, passed the bar, and is now an attorney with the Oakland firm of Boornazian, Jensen & Garthe. Sara emphasized that financial aid is only part of the support the program has to offer. "Your sponsors, mentors and Meritus staff are there for you. They want you to succeed," she said, encouraging the students to cultivate relationships and to seek advice and assistance whenever necessary.

Richard Carranza, Deputy Superintendent for the San Francisco Unified School District, sounded the keynote of social justice. "When I see you all assembled here," he told the scholars, "I think, *You* are social justice." You are recipients of a great opportunity. "Pay it forward." That's how social justice is realized, individual to individual, a step at a time.

We offer our thanks to Union Bank and Morgan Consulting for their generous support of the 2010 Scholarship Awards Ceremony; donor Ingbritt Christensen for program design; donor Beate Boultinghouse for photography, and donor Becky Pringle for her visual "toast" to our newest scholars.

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Class of 2006 GRADUATES!

Thirty students received their scholarships in 2006, and today 25 are college graduates with two more planning to graduate in 2011. Hats off! We are extremely pleased with their overall progress and look forward to a 90% college graduation rate for these scholars.

Our 2006 scholars received their education in the following universities and colleges:

- 47% University of California
- 23% California State Universities
- 17% Private In-State
- 9% Private Out-of-State
- 4% Public Out-of-State

Thanks to all that have helped to make this possible!

Meritus Alumni Launch New Association



(L to R) Nestor Navidad '97, Erick Frausto '02, Tracy Zhu '04, Janelle Charles '02, Antricia Allen-Makau '04, Aaron White '04

It's official! The Meritus Alumni Circle, launched in January 2010, provides alumni with social, community and professional networking opportunities. In addition to online communications, the 186 scholars who have participated in the Meritus College Fund program since 1996 will have access to quarterly activities where they can physically gather together.

Janelle Charles, 2002 Meritus scholar, and Tracy Zhu, Meritus class of 2004, are spearheading the effort. "We definitely want to have fun activities that will generate the most attendance," said Charles, "but we also want to focus on activities that will help us give back to the community and help us with professional networking and career development."

Added Zhu, "Meritus' financial and mentoring support was instrumental in helping us achieve our college dreams. Now that we are alumni, we want to stay connected to Meritus and build on those values."

Charles, a graduate of Bowdoin College who is now preparing for medical school, is organizing a Meritus Alumni group to join in the AIDS Walk in Golden Gate Park, on July 18.

For September, Zhu is planning a tour of toxic sites in the Bayview Hunters Point combined with habitat restoration at Heron's Head Park. Zhu graduated from Mount Holyoke College and works as the Youth Development Coordinator at Literacy for Environmental Justice in Hunter's Point.

Later this year, alumni Antricia Allen, 2004 scholar and graduate of San Francisco State University, and UC Irvine grad, Erick Frausto, Meritus class of 2002, are planning a career development panel followed by a pizza dinner.

All alumni are encouraged to join the Meritus Alumni Circle, <http://groups.google.com/group/meritusalumnicircle/topics>.

Here's to a great start!

Passing the Torch!
A 2006 Graduate Remembers...



"Only about a decade ago, I was living with my grandparents under the shadow of my father's gambling addiction and debts. I was scared of the world. Today, I am a college graduate striving to go to medical school. I have interned at nonprofits addressing ethics of new biotechnology, at nonprofits advocating diversity for disabled and inner city youth; I have led teams to fight cancer, and I have organized Habitat for Humanity trips to New Orleans. I have also taken my volunteerism overseas to Fiji, China, Israel, Ecuador, and Panama. Apathy is not my world anymore.

Of course, I've had a lot of help along the way - that is why I am adamant about giving back to my community. This is the philosophy of Meritus College Fund, aimed at helping disadvantaged students to achieve their college education. Through this scholarship, I was able to gain an education that I had never dreamed about. It helped me build a sense of confidence where I believe I can achieve anything. More importantly, the scholarship enabled me to follow my passions and pursue every opportunity so that I, in turn, can make a meaningful impact on the world.

Though I have yet to find out what will be my road after graduation, I am confident that I am in control of the wheel and I now steer the direction of my future. I truly thank you for your generosity in helping with my college education. Your gift has helped me learn how to guide my future and realize that my potential is beyond what I have expected. I hope that one day I will be in your position and be able to light the dreams of more students."

Comings and Goings...

As in every team, some members will move on, as other will jump on board. It is with sadness that Meritus will be saying goodbye to Shane Powers, Manager of Student Relations. Shane will be pursuing his passion in photography through a teaching position in India. Shane has been with Meritus since 2005, when he began to coach and track a "mere" 110 scholars. He has shepherded these students, along with the 107 who have joined the ranks since then, through college. His commitment will be missed. We wish him well (and secretly wish to join in on the adventure!)

Filling these shoes will be Cedrick Andrews who comes to us with an extensive background in college access and public policy. Cedrick has worked with students, families, high school counselors, and campus administrators through university admissions addressing the needs of low-income youth. He is a native of Alabama and a graduate of Vanderbilt University. We welcome him to our team!

Last but not least, we also welcome Ana Moraga, 2001 Meritus scholar, as the first program staff person fully dedicated to our mentor program. Ana joined the team in the June 2010. She holds a degree in B.A. in Psychology and Spanish from Loyola Marymount University. Upon graduating, Ana founded a non-profit in Guatemala City to provide literacy and vocational training for women. In this position she led the organization through program development, outreach and training. She will be a great addition to Meritus.



Cedrick Andrews, Ana Moraga,
Shane Powers (LtoR)

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