



March 28, 2018

Issue #2

**Greetings from The SUHI Foundation!!**

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**Want to stay informed? Interested in volunteering?**

If you'd like to receive this Newsletter, and other information, directly, sign up below! The SUHI Foundation is always in need of volunteers, for both short-term efforts (i.e. working on an organizational project, sharing your experience(s) with our college students, etc.) and longer-term commitments (i.e., serving on a committee, supporting fundraising efforts, etc.). Please provide us with your contact information in the following link <https://goo.gl/forms/B4zECij4BxN7R75c2>. Thank you!



## **Kicking off 2018 with a Great Start!**

This past January, The SUHI Foundation held its 2nd Annual Winter Workshop, with over 20 SUHI Scholars in attendance. The purpose of the event was to provide extra academic, social and emotional support to our Scholars, which the Foundation has done more of since expanding its programs in the past two years.

The theme of the Winter Workshop revolved around the importance of helping students learn more about themselves, encouraging them to become better self-advocates, and teaching them the importance of persevering in the higher education system. This included exercises on discovering their strengths, learning new tactics to de-stress, incorporating positive psychology in their day-to-day lives, tips on how to network, and hearing the experiences of SUHI Scholar Alumni panelists. Through this and other events, the Foundation supports the college retention and graduation success of its Scholars.

The SUHI Foundation's mission is not just to provide monetary aid to SUHI Scholars, but also ensure students have the resources and support that they need to attain a degree and accomplish their career objectives. With the Freshman Success Workshop, presented the summer before students start college, and the Winter Workshop programming, we help SUHI Scholars successfully bridge the transition to higher education. If you would like to take part in this effort, please contact us!

## **In Their Own Words: Messages from Our SUHI Scholars...**

"...This past year, I am proud to say that I have walked the walk, and not just academically. I want people, especially youth who have the same background as me, to see somebody like them succeeding in a space that doesn't make it easy for them. I want to be a part of that paving for the future.

I always ask myself, what is going to be my legacy? What's going to be the purpose of my going to the university? Get a degree, and go to grad school, and get a job? Turn my back on the city that raised me? When I ask myself what I want my legacy to be, I simply go back home to National City, and take a look around."

- Ray Decadiz, SUHI Class of 2014 - UC Santa Cruz, Marine Biology

## Board Member Spotlight: Mrs. Georgia Wapnowski



Georgia Wapnowski was born in Hilo, Hawaii and moved to California in 1957. She is a product of Chula Vista and National City Schools, and a Sweetwater High School Class of 1964 graduate. Selflessly committed to her community, she volunteered many years with the youth baseball programs in National City, the Sweetwater High Quarterback Club, and the Reading for Literacy program. SUHI has always been a family-affair for Georgia, as she married Class of 1962 grad Robert Wapnowski, and their two children are also proud SUHI alumni: Paul, Class of 1992 and

Maelin, Class of 2000. She worked at Sweetwater High School for 14 years and had the pleasure of working with Principals Dr. Phipps, Mr. Mora, Mr. Braddock and Dr. Del Rosario. Georgia retired in 2011 and since then has served on the board of The SUHI Foundation. She has held the roles of Vice President and Director, served on the Scholarship Committee and Grants Committee, and supported several fundraising and program efforts. As a mother, grandmother, SUHI alumni and active volunteer, Georgia has significantly made an impact on the board of The SUHI Foundation and the broader SUHI community. She has invested her time and energy with full dedication for almost 7 years and we remain forever grateful for her service.

## Mini-Grants Awarded to SUHI Programs

The SUHI Foundation launched a new Mini-Grants program this winter as a way to continue to support school efforts that ensure student success through expanded experiences and enrichment opportunities. The applicants, representing staff- and student-led programs and projects, had to demonstrate an unmet financial need and align with The SUHI



Foundation's mission and focus areas: 1) academic support and career exploration 2) visual and performing arts 3) athletics/sports activities 4) leadership and motivational opportunities. The process began at the end of 2017 and was completed in March, with the Grants Committee considering awards ranging from \$100-\$1,000. This year, we were able to award a total of \$4,300 in mini-grants. The winners of this competitive first round received funding to cover the following items:

1. Grants for Students' AP Exam Fees
2. Mirrors for the Ballet Folklorico Dance Room

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3. Food and Recognition Items for College Signing Day
4. Transportation for a Spanish Class Theater Outing
5. Tickets for the Science Club's Magic Mountain Physics Day Fieldtrip
6. Materials and Equipment for the Life Sciences Department
7. Production Materials for the VAPA Department's "Our Lamp Glows Bright" Showcase

The Mini-Grant program will be available again in late summer. Our ability to continue to fund these and other important efforts depends on your support. If you are interested in serving on the Grants Committee, or donating funds to this direct-impact program, please contact us.

### **SUHI Scholar Alumni Spotlight:**



Michelle Reynoso, a Sweetwater High School c/o 2006 graduate, attended UCLA where she received her degree in Political Science and Chicano Studies. Michelle and her 3 siblings were raised in National City in a single-mother household where financial struggles were always actively present. When Michelle was in high school, her sister Jaqueline went off to Harvard to pursue her Master's, serving as living proof to her that achieving higher education was real and attainable. Michelle worked hard to get into a prestigious university like UCLA and was awarded a scholarship from The Morgan Family Foundation. She stated "This scholarship saved

my life first quarter of college...if I didn't have it, I would not have had money to eat!" At UCLA, Michelle was involved on campus and took advantage of her college experience by taking on internships and studying abroad in Mexico. But, obtaining a Bachelor's degree did not necessarily mean that she was set for life. Graduating in the midst of the Great Recession, it was very difficult to get a job and Michelle felt like she got cheated of the "American Dream". Her work experience during and after college fueled her desire to fight for employee rights and social justice. In 2013, Michelle enrolled at the California Western School of Law and obtained her Juris Doctorate in 2016. She openly shares that having to take the Bar Exam 3 times taught her, once more, the importance of being resilient and accepting failure as an unavoidable part of achieving success.

Michelle represents every bit of what the Foundation believes SUHI Scholars are fully capable of achieving. She has now established her family and criminal law practice in San Diego. If you would like to reach out to her, she's available at [attorney@michellereynsolaw.com](mailto:attorney@michellereynsolaw.com).



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## Contact Us

### Our mailing address is:

The SUHI Foundation  
2900 Highland Avenue  
National City, CA 91950

### Visit our website:

[www.thesuhifoundation.org](http://www.thesuhifoundation.org)

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