




Happy Retirement

EOPS is honored to celebrate several of our colleagues who will be retiring in December, 2024. We salute their remarkable journey and commitment to EOPS students and GCC.

This special edition newsletter includes each retiree's career journey and words of advice gained through years of experience.

Dear students, feel free to stop by EOPS to express your well wishes and bid farewell to our retirees prior to the end of semester.





Elmira Nazaryan

Director, EOPS/ CARE/ FYSP

My Work Background: My entire career has been in education. I have been working for over 36 years in community colleges, and CSU and UC systems. Most of that time was in community colleges serving EOPS students at various levels.

Understanding different educational systems helped me synthesize the knowledge and bring it to GCC. Some of the positions I've held were research assistant, outreach counselor, academic counselor, and academic manager. I consider myself so fortunate to be in education and have a direct positive impact on students. When you realize that in 30 minutes of a conversation with a student you can help a person see their future in a more positive light, that is the most fulfilling experience one can have. In the counseling world, this occurs daily.

I have a true passion for student success and employee wellbeing, and in all my decisions as a manager I strive to find a balance in advocating for both, students and employees. I am wishing my best to my colleagues in their professional careers and personal lives.

My Advice to Younger Generations: In spite of the career market enticements, find something that you are truly passionate about, so your work can bring you happiness and joy. Only then you can dedicate yourself to your job and make a successful career out of it. Remember to be the guardians of your values and fiercely protect those no matter the pressures to submit to whatever is accepted as a norm today. Those will change year to year, but you will enjoy the confidence of knowing who you truly are and what you stand for. Wishing our students the best of luck in their academic careers and personal pursuits.

My Retirement Plans: I have many interests and hobbies, including: traveling, business, arts, music and more. With newly found time, I hope to enjoy more of these and continue my self development, as that for me is a lifelong pursuit.



Shakeh Ataian

EOPS Counselor

My Work background: I started out at GCC 34 years ago in a clerical position. I realized early that I'm social by nature, and like to help people. Yet, I didn't know until later that I wanted to be a counselor.

My Advice to Younger Generations: Getting educated is important, but not the only thing in life. You have to be satisfied emotionally, as well. Know yourself, live life to the fullest and follow your dreams. Money and things are important, but there are other things that are even more important. Having a good life is important. I sometimes see students under a great deal of pressure, and so I advise you to focus on your well-being, never give up on your dreams, and know your strengths. This is what I have learned from 34 years of experience working with students.

My Retirement Plans: I don't have any specific plans. I would like to take some classes. I would like to volunteer for an organization that feeds hungry kids worldwide. I would like to spend more time with my friends, family and especially with my granddaughter, and to travel with my husband.



James Castel De Oro

EOPS Counselor

My Work Background: I've always worked in education and started out as a school teacher. There was a point that I was feeling stagnant as a grade school teacher. My cousin, Rochelle, was a community college counselor who encouraged me to transition to community college counseling. She advised me to continue my education and complete a Master's degree. I joined the Puente Program at my cousin's college, which involved matching students with professionals in careers of interest to them.

I was a mentor to mentees who were interested in grade school teaching. I was first hired in a community college classified position. Within my position, I was limited in what I could do, and would see counselors and what they were able to do. Encouraged by my counseling colleagues to pursue my Master's, I left my classified position and started the San Diego State Multicultural Community Counseling Program as part of a cohort of 27 students of diverse backgrounds.

My Advice for Younger Generations: I'm not a science or math person, and felt these were my crosses throughout college. I always had to really, really apply myself with these subjects. There were times that I really wanted to give up and on one particular occasion, one of my sophomore classmates said; James, "This is only temporary. You just gotta get through this." This advice has always stayed with me and when I talk to students, I give them the same advice. This is temporary and you're going to get through it. You're going to finish, you're going to be that teacher, you're going to be that doctor, you're going to be that lawyer, you're going to be that social worker. That sentiment has always stayed with me because it is so true. Looking back, I remember the struggles and wanting to throw in the towel and give up, and that it was all indeed temporary.

My retirement Plans: I'm kind of excited, but at the same time I really need to find something to occupy my time. I have a priest friend who has a few things in mind that I can volunteer for. As you know, I also love baking and cooking. I've never taken the cake decorating class, so I think maybe I'll take a cake decorating class. I've always wanted to learn how to make cake decorations, roses etc.. My two little fur babies take a lot of my time too, and I look forward to spending more time with them. Other than that, I am open to whatever comes my way.

Anahid Mardres

*EOPS Program & Services
Senior Specialist/CARE
Coordinator*

My Work Background : In 1993, I started at GCC as a Work Study employee while pursuing a General Office A.S. I was eventually hired as a part-time Relief Clerk. I had to be flexible to work in a multitude of areas between the credit and non-credit campuses, for eight years. I was then officially hired full-time by EOPS in 1999.



My Advice for Younger Generations: Show up on time and be serious. Your education and preparation are only as visible and effective as your ability to show up on time and in full.

How I came to know this: My own personality and having three kids and full-time work, made me into a person who must balance everything. As a side benefit of working at GCC, I gained the ability to understand the U.S. educational system, and appropriately directed my own kids.

My Retirement Plans: To take care of myself, enjoy my kids and grandkids, and travel.