

FODARA SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

For 2020-21, FODARA awarded four \$1000 scholarships, two at De Anza and two at Foothill. Below are the winning students' inspiring personal essays (edited for privacy and space).

Austin (De Anza) Major: Psychology for Transfer



Throughout my childhood, I was raised with a constant reminder of the importance of service. The religion I was born into ingrained within me the value of close community and support. Everyone was expected to be there for each other and to offer what they could. This regular practice of being there for others has stayed with me, even after I had left the faith. Middle school was difficult. As I adjusted to a new school, I also had to adjust to a new me. After being closed within a tight-knit Mormon community, I discovered for the first time what it meant to be gay. I quickly discovered that I no longer belonged to the group who brought me up. I took a major risk and opened up to my mom. I finally found the words and was surprised to be met with so much love. She expressed that she didn't know what this meant, but that she would always love me and always had my back. I knew then, I would be ok. The remaining two years of middle school dragged on. Eventually, relief finally came with a move to California. I was ecstatic by the fresh start high school offered. Unfortunately, there was no pre-established LGBTQ

club. After meeting some friends, we decided to begin one ourselves during our sophomore year. The room was packed at our first meeting, and instantly the group began to unite. As I looked around the room, I heard struggling teenagers giving the support and advice that they themselves needed; we were able to offer each other advocacy and help. That was the moment I knew this was something real. After losing the community I had grown up with, it was magical to build my own that I knew I could truly fit into. I continued to pursue my love of service as time went on. I volunteered at the LGBTQ Youth Space where I was exposed to real life community advocacy. At this same time, I fell in love with my high school AP Psychology course and discovered a field committed to improving the lives of others. At De Anza I have continued to explore the vast diversity this field has to offer and pinpoint my own passions. As I prepare to transfer to a four-year university in pursuit of my future in psychology, I have worked to develop the skills I need through my classes and work as a tutor in the Writing and Reading Center. My dream is to serve others on the most personal level possible, as a counselor/therapist, to listen to and be there for others just like my mom was there for me. This world is so full of sorrow and rejection, and we need as many people working one-on-one on the ground level as possible in order to heal. I am devoted to continuing this journey of being a part of this movement: a push for connection, empathy, and hope.

Dear Foothill-De Anza Retirement Association,

Thank you so much for the incredibly generous scholarship! I am honored to have been recognized, and I greatly appreciate the support. As a student of De Anza College over the last two years, I have learned and grown so much. I am so grateful for the many professors who have only continued to fuel my passion for my studies in psychology. I am also grateful for my time working at the Student Success Center as a writing tutor and the experience of being a part of the De Anza community at large. As I prepare to transfer to Long Beach State to continue my pursuit of psychology and a career in helping others through the field of mental health support, I will continue to look back on these formative years with gratitude. Thank you again for your financial and educational support as I push forward to pursue my dreams.

*Sincerely,
Austin*

Annalise (De Anza) Major: Journalism

Tucked away in the upper portion of my closet rests my favorite childhood stories-- *Goose Girl*, *Walk Two Moons*, and *Holes*. They were the early catalysts for my love of literature. I have far outgrown their plots and should probably gift them to a new home. But I can't. I can't let go of these books because they have shaped me into who I am today. Enraptured by their stories, I formed my empathetic morals and values that I hold today. They are the pillars of who I have become at De Anza and outside of it. I like to think that my path, both academic and career-driven, is uplifted by these first novels.

Currently, I am pursuing a journalism degree, with hopes of continuing my education all the way to a master's degree in journalism. Journalism may not seem to have much of a connection to my bibliophilia, but it does. As a journalist, I am empowered through my ability to empathize with people who I interview, which in turn allows me a greater connection to the stories that I write. For instance, I listened to an undocumented student illustrate her trek through the desert, drawing on my ability to empathize with an experience I have not had and will never personally endure. This deep emotional connection I develop with my sources drives my yearning to uplift unheard voices; I believe my success as a journalist was all formed through the empathy I learned from stepping into characters' shoes in the novels I devoured. I am able to see outside perspectives other than my own, and this path that I'm on is truly rewarding.

Additionally, my ability to empathize propels me forward in my path in journalism. I was diagnosed with social anxiety and depression in my freshman year of high school, which seems so at odds with my career choice. As a journalist, I have to talk with people every day, and my empathy allows me to triumph over my anxieties. My hands still shake a bit and my thoughts can't help from racing when I talk to someone new, but I am much better than I once was, incapacitated by my social fears. My need to understand others outweighs the anxieties that I face on a daily basis, and I am more resilient because of it. However, the academic and professional path I am headed down is not cheap. My family is classified as middle class, but with the rising tuition rates of the universities coupled with the inflated prices of living in the Bay Area, I will have to take out an exorbitant amount of student loans. My family simply cannot support my academic endeavors. If I had the privilege of being granted a scholarship, I would use it to pay off some of my future tuition fees, with less worry about student loan debt. Ultimately, I am a journalist through and through, fueled by my own personal empathy and curiosity. I am resilient. I am determined to use my power as a journalist to uplift voices that are not being listened to through receiving a degree in journalism.

Moksha (Foothill) Major: Psychology

I have always believed education allows me to reach for the stars because of the values my immigrant parents instilled in me regarding its importance. I knew I had to succeed in my studies, so when my family's personal and financial struggles stripped my life of comfort and consistency, I learned to become resilient and adaptable in the face of challenges. I was inspired to pursue my degree in psychology because of its amazing capacity to explain the social world from the perspective of the human brain. At Foothill College, I have explored my interests in the field of psychology without any economic burden. This has allowed me to plan my long-term educational and career goals of earning my Ph.D. to understand the inner workings of the mind in order to help others. Through financial assistance, I will be able to fulfill my dreams of studying psychology further and benefitting the communities I enter.

My parents' personal problems, combined with our family's financial struggles, required me to attend three high schools. For years, I felt lost and out of control, but then in my final year of high school, I took an AP psychology course which granted me command over my fate and ignited a deep passion in me to study psychology further. Through uncovering the secrets of the human psyche, and its impact on behavior and relationships, I could comprehend my circumstances and figure out how to change them for the better. My desire to study psychology to a further extent was dynamic, as my ability to see the world had transformed into an ability to understand it. Attending a four-year school was not feasible at first due to my parents' economic situation, but my determination to succeed academically brought me to Foothill College. With unwavering persistence to make it in higher education, I closely engaged with my academic community through taking part in the Honors program, working two jobs, creating close relationships with my peers, and participating in clubs. These enriching experiences have prepared me for my transfer to a four-year college or university. UCLA is my top choice school for transferring, and I have also applied to other UC and CSU schools. My long-term goal is to earn a Ph.D. in neuroscience, so I can understand-- the brain from both social

and biological perspectives. Psychology widened my world-view, and it motivated me to want to help others who are navigating turbulent conditions. Through firsthand experience of knowing how a troubled childhood can impact young people, I want to assist others in combating hurdles to attain an education and take care of their mental health. My plan is to create an organization where individuals can learn non-invasive techniques, such as yoga and meditation, to reduce stress, and access therapists, counselors, and coaches who can guide them through their personal journeys to happiness and success. Scholarships would help me pay for college, course materials, and living expenses. With the security of knowing I need not worry about money, attaining scholarships will help me to not only enter but flourish in future academic settings where I can focus on my goal of learning psychology.

Dear Donor,

Thank you so much for your generosity in providing this FHDA Retirees Association Scholarship. It has been my dream to attend UCLA since I was a young girl, and this year I was accepted. This scholarship will help me on my path to earning my degree and fulfilling my goals. I am a Psychology major, and I plan on owning an alternative medicine business. Having a degree in psychology will help me understand the relationship between the mind and the body, and I plan on using this knowledge to create a business that can help others. I am extremely grateful for your support on my journey to achieving my aspirations.

*Best,
Moksha*

Luis (Foothill) Major: Economics for Transfer

I am Luis, a sophomore at Foothill College looking to transfer this fall to a University of California or a California State University. I am the first-generation American in my family to attend an American college. I'm accustomed to change and adaptability; this allows me to diligently work on any task with determination as I've learned to adapt my goals to become the most efficient and hardworking person I can be. COVID-19 significantly affected our lives and has forced us to adapt to a virtual world. Regardless, I was able to adapt to the challenges of everyday life and school by balancing working from home and a job. Adaptability is a quality that I will continue to apply in my life.

I chose economics as my major for my expertise in math and its application to the real world. My passion for math sparked an interest in economics as it taught me how math was applied to real-world situations on a small and large scale. My interest in economics then sprouted as I fell in love with analyzing graphs, calculating formulas, and understanding its application to the real world. After I obtain an associate's degree in economics at Foothill, I plan to transfer to a university to work towards a bachelor's or master's. A scholarship would greatly assist me in achieving my academic goal by providing a method of payment to pay for my degree, housing, books, and more; it would provide a much needed crutch to help me finish my education. My career goal is to be an economist or financial advisor for a small local business to promote small businesses and to find methods to induce economic prosperity. I wish to be a positive impact to whomever I work for by using my skills and knowledge gained from my degree to apply them meaningfully and professionally. The largest obstacle I am working to overcome is my financial situation. My immigrant parents are burdened with two teenagers trying to get an education in the Bay Area. They each dedicate endless work hours to put food on the table and to keep us satisfied. My father works full time and my mother works two jobs. Coming from Mexico and France, my parents are unaccustomed to the high tuition rates. Moreover, my brother who is in high school will soon start his college career, putting more financial pressure on my parents. My parents will not be able to support both our educations at once. A scholarship would greatly aid my parents by providing relief in paying for my tuition.

Another struggle to overcome is financial independence. I realized at 17 that I will soon have to be financially independent from my parents to alleviate their burdens and to begin leading my own life. I began working while going to school to finance my hobbies and begin saving. As I graduated I began riding motorcycles with

my dad; I am beginning to get a taste of adult life by having to pay the yearly expenses for registration, insurance, and maintenance. I am working to educate myself on financial freedom while battling with bills and payments. A scholarship would greatly help me in establishing savings while using scholarship money for tuition, textbooks, and shelter. It would greatly assist me in allocating money for future use while still being able to pay for my college tuition. In conclusion, I would like to leave you with this: I am a motivated individual who is willing to sacrifice and adapt to become the best version of himself. The next step in my life comes at college, and a scholarship will provide me with a path to success that is crucial for me to fulfill my academic and career goals.

Dear Donor,

I am writing to you to express my deepest gratitude and appreciation in selecting me as a recipient of the FHDA Retirees Association Scholarship, from the FODARA. One does not know how much a scholarship will positively impact my university experience, especially when it comes to paying bills. My parents already overwork themselves to keep my brother and I happy at home, so any additional financial supplements as such relieves a lot of pressure for them. In turn, I will be able to use the money I received from this scholarship to use it for books and tuition and other university costs. On to a little bit about myself. I am currently a sophomore at Foothill College studying Economics for transfer. My educational background involves elementary and high school in Palo Alto, and middle school and part of high school in Austin, Texas. I am in the Honors Institute at Foothill as I strive for the best grades and knowledge in each class. My educational background has prepared me to transfer to a UC and work diligently towards achieving a degree. Additionally, I am currently working as a math instructor at Mathnasium. I deeply enjoy spending time outside of class to educate the younger generation and make math fun and engaging. Outside of school, I love to ride my motorcycle with my dad, play basketball, go mountain biking, and go hiking. I am very much an outdoors person and love spending time in nature. I also deeply enjoy camping. Moving on, I know that this degree will help me in realizing my dream of finding success in university. My aspiration is to work to achieve a Bachelor's degree in two years, and this scholarship will allow me to pay the fees to accomplish this goal. By paying for books, food, and other expenses in college this scholarship will allow me to sustain myself without diving into my savings. I plan to use my economics degree to become a financial analyst. My other aspiration is to start a business with my friends and use my economic knowledge to create a successful and profitable business. Being savvy with mathematics and graphic interpretation, I find economics invigorating and exciting as it is applicable to the real world. Hence, my future plan is to use my degree to find job security as a financial analyst or economist, while working to start up a business and make it successful. My degree will provide me with such an education to find success in my career. I cannot express how much this scholarship helps my family and I in covering expenses for school. As aforementioned, my parents already work long hours to keep our family afloat, so any supplements like this are greatly helpful in funding my education. Such a scholarship, no matter the size, relieves a lot of pressure on my parents to work in funding my degree. I aspire to dedicate myself to my education and major, and use this scholarship to boost me to success. I am immensely grateful that this scholarship was awarded to me, and I look forward to keeping in contact with this organization for a potential scholarship renewal the following year. I appreciate your support in achieving my educational goals. Once again, thank you. My family and I greatly appreciate your decision in aiding us to cover such expenses.