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**From:** Bernadine Fong <fongbernadine@fhda.edu>  
**Sent:** Sunday, October 16, 2022 11:25 PM  
**To:** foothill  
**Cc:** centralservices  
**Subject:** Creating a sense of belonging  
**Attachments:** FEI\_USAW\_Calendar2022 V3.pdf

This unsolicited email was sent to me recently, from one of our former students who graduated in 2015, and I want to share with all of you, some who are mentioned in her email but many more who also contributed to her success. I think what she says represents what so many of our students, past and present, experience by being a Foothill student:

*"Being part of the Foothill community truly changed my life and helped me find my career passion. I can't help but write to you to express my gratitude as an alumna.*

*I took my first job in a tech startup before coming to Foothill College. I felt that my shyness hindered my workplace relationships. Moreover, I didn't find purpose and happiness in what I did. Although I had studied at several colleges before, it was at Foothill that I experienced belonging for the first time. I remember that Professor Preston Ni (Communications Instructor) taught me how to stand up for myself in relationships, and that Andrew Lee (academic counselor) helped me clarify my personal values and encouraged me to explore my passion in teaching. It was at Foothill that I took a psychological counseling course for the first time. And my instructor, Ernie Schmidt, taught us so many cognitive behavioral strategies that enabled me to take control of my emotions. My Japanese instructor, Kazuko Iida, and English instructor, Natalia Menendez, instilled in me confidence and professionalism in speaking and writing. Finally, I have so many thanks for the professors in the Mathematics Department (Ion Georgiou, Phong Pham, etc.) and April Henderson from the EOPS program. They patiently helped me get started with tutoring math students, which laid the foundation for me to pursue a full-time teaching position.*

*When I walked on the empty campus during COVID-19, I realized how precious it was to have all the face-to-face opportunities with these teachers and tutor students in teams. That was the best part of my learning experience! I truly hope that the Foothill community will thrive again and empower more students to take control of their lives. Thank you so much!"*

While some of the faculty and staff mentioned are no longer with us, her sentiments are a reminder of how much we can impact our students, often without realizing it. I also was struck with her quote *"I experienced belonging for the first time."* This underscores the work David Yeager shared with us on opening day, and many faculty and staff members have asked to join in our emerging (in the midst of being developed) fellows' program. We are under discussion with David's group to develop a model from an initiative he conducted recently at UT, Austin. This model involves 1) opportunities to collaborate with behavioral scientists; 2) coaching and support from practitioners; 3) a community of practice. Details will follow.

And as I mentioned last week, creating a sense of belonging is so critical for our undocumented students, particularly as this is Undocumented Student Action Week. Creating a sense of belonging is critical.

Here is the notice sent to you last week on behalf of our Family Engagement Institute which is our designated DREAMER liaison office :

*Please see the attached flyer for full information on the Undocumented Student Action Week (Oct 17-21) events. Join our colleagues and students for the Opening Ceremony in the Library Quad on Monday, October 17 and encourage students and community members to take advantage of the services (free legal advice, demystifying financial aid, and training on advocacy) and be sure to take time to attend a screening of the documentary, "Status Pending," in the Smithwick at 12:00 PM or 6:00 PM on Thursday, October 20.*

However, a sense of belonging is not just for our students but applies to all of us. How do we welcome one another and create a sense of belonging in the workplace? Our Opening Day video introduced over 70 people who joined the Foothill community during the Covid years to the present, including new faculty, staff, and administrators. Even as we begin the 4<sup>th</sup> week of our quarter, and many people returning to campus after sheltering in place, we have the opportunity to welcome each other back with warmth and inclusiveness. On the first week of classes the division offices hosted “open houses” with food and beverages to provide students and employees a sense of welcome. As we approach the holidays (already) we can continue this spirit of inclusiveness and belonging. Stay tuned for the Halloween celebration announcement to come, a joint effort between the college and our students....!