



Letters of Support

August 2023

Please note these letters were received after the June Ad Hoc Committee meeting. Letters received for the June Ad Hoc Committee meeting are on the [Cradle-to-Career website](#).

07/17/2023

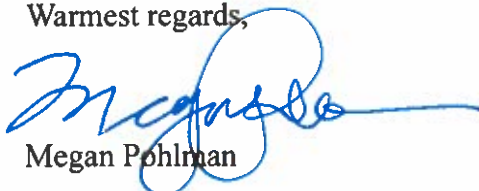
To whom it may concern,

It is my absolute pleasure to recommend Ms. Alexis Takagi as a transformative educational partner for the Community Engagement Advisory Board for the California Cradle to Career Data System. I came to know Ms. Takagi when we became cohort classmates at Santa Clara University on our shared journey of earning a Doctorate in Social Justice Leadership in May 2025. Ms. Takagi immediately distinguished herself as a thought leader in the area of higher education through her insatiable intellectual curiosity and undoubtable intelligence. She speaks softly, but confidently and her voice has become a trusted companion for myself and my other cohort members these years.

It is no wonder she speaks with such confidence and sincerity considering the plethora of professional and volunteer experiences she has been able to involve herself in over the last few years, all while pursuing excellence as a student of higher education herself. At Stanford, Ms. Takagi worked as the outreach coordinator for the Institute for Computational and Mathematical Engineering and was instrumental in initiating and maintaining the crucial partnerships between Stanford and the community colleges across the Bay Area in an effort to expose students to college and the STEM fields. She also recently served as the Co-Chair of the Policy & Budget Advocacy Team for the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities where she successfully advocated for a \$25.9 million investment in improvements in the Cal Grant Program for students attending Independent California Colleges and Universities.

She continues to serve as a model of *servant leader* with her recent appointment as Commissioner to the California Student Aid Commission. I am truly honored to share in such a rich pedagogical space, where thinkers and learners like her are raising the bar on what it means to pursue social justice in the service of others. I am beyond excited to see all of the positive changes she will bring to your organization. She is intellectually curious and is committed to the kind of self-reflection and analysis it takes to make a great student and a great leader.

Warmest regards,



Megan Pohlman

Director of Equity, Mountain View Whisman School District

July 19, 2023

California Cradle to Career Data System
Governing Board
via: info@c2c.ca.gov

Re: Recommendation for Alexis Takagi – California Cradle to Career Community Data System – Community Engagement Advisory Board

To Whom it May Concern:

I am enthusiastic to recommend Alexis Takagi as a representative on the statewide Cradle to Career (C2C) Community Engagement Advisory Board. I have known Alexis for almost two years, first as a student advocate and now as a colleague in our roles representing the independent California colleges and universities (ICCU) sector.

I began mentoring Alexis through her involvement with AICCU's Independent California Colleges Advocate Program (ICCAP), a six-month student advocacy program that I manage. Alexis served as co-chair of the Policy and Budget Advocacy Team, a leadership role she handled very well. Her collaborative efforts with her peers resulted in a remarkable achievement: securing a \$25.9 million investment in the Cal Grant Program for students attending ICCUs, in the 2022 state budget. Alexis spearheaded the development of the cohort's policy priorities, focusing on key areas such as enhancing affordability, bolstering student support and services both on and off campus, and advocating for post-secondary opportunities for undocumented students. Her leadership and authorship played a pivotal role in advancing these important initiatives impacting over 27,000 ICCU students.

As a recent graduate of Santa Clara University (SCU) and a current Doctor of Education (EdD) candidate in the Social Justice Leadership program at SCU, Alexis can tap into her recent experience as a transfer student, navigating various higher educational sectors as well as her mentorship experience helping other students navigate similar experiences. Alexis remains deeply engaged in her communities, constantly attuned to local, regional, and statewide diverse needs. I have witnessed her growth from student advocate, graduate student/researcher to now an Outreach Coordinator at Stanford University. I am proud of how Alexis has utilized the ICCAP experience and actively applies the principles she is gaining in her Ed.D program at SCU in real time. This advanced degree has helped her sharpen her research skills, utilize data to support college planning among other equity initiatives in her various leadership roles.

For example, Alexis plays a pivotal role in coordinating numerous partnerships with local community colleges. Through these collaborations, Alexis has facilitated opportunities for students to participate in STEM workshops, providing them with exposure to college

experiences. By leveraging her expertise and combining it with her passion for equitable education, Alexis has made significant contributions to empowering students and fostering inclusivity in educational settings. This direct contact and experience with student initiatives would add value to the C2C Community Engagement Advisory Board.

Alexis, leverages her knowledge gained from her EdD, has successfully applied her expertise to enhance her support for students and families. She currently holds the position of a research assistant, where she dedicates her efforts to studying college choice and postsecondary readiness. Simultaneously, Alexis serves as a graduate assistant within Santa Clara University's Thriving Neighbors Program. This program focuses on fostering success at every stage of the K-12 educational pipeline, specifically targeting first-generation students of color and preparing them for college. Her extensive experience working directly with students and families has enabled her to foster research-practitioner partnerships, facilitate collaboration and data collection stewardship to better address local, regional, and statewide unique needs.

In closing, Alexis has an unwavering commitment to advocating for college affordability, and accessibility, so that all students regardless of their background can achieve their educational goals. Her skills and experience would bring a unique approach to the work of the Cradle to Career Community Engagement Advisory Board that would contribute to the advancement of the board's mission, particularly in her advisory role on framing C2C data to empower decision makers to support students' success.

Respectfully,



Susan Reyes
Advocacy Manager, AICCU
susan.reyes@aiccu.edu
(916) 219-4335



July 24, 2023

To Whom It May Concern:

It is my pleasure to recommend Alexis R. Takagi to serve on the Cradle to Career Community and Outreach Advisory Board. Alexis is currently a doctoral student at Santa Clara University's (SCU) Social Justice Leadership program. SCU's doctor of education (EdD) program is designed to prepare students to participate in and lead complex organizations working to transform educational opportunities and outcomes for traditionally marginalized communities. As part of this process, we ground our work in the Jesuit tradition of "cura personalis" – care for the whole person. Alexis exhibits these qualities in multiple ways.

As an emerging scholar, Alexis's research focuses on the educational experiences of community college students. She is committed to centering their stories and to identify ways for institutions to serve them in humanizing ways. To do so, Alexis draws on her personal experiences across the community college system, offering a keen understanding on how to improve counseling services and mentoring opportunities. Her knowledge in this area is also helping to advance educational scholarship. Presently, we are co-writing a manuscript on Latinx students' decision-making process in attending community college. I invited her to participate in this project because I have been impressed with her analytic skills and thoughtfulness in discussing student narratives. Alexis has been pivotal in synthesizing relevant literature and analyze data in ways that highlight system supports and barriers. Given her knowledge of the community college system, I have relied on her unique insights to confirm interpretations of the data. Her involvement has also helped ground the work in ways that support decision-making through data-use.

I have also been impressed with Alexis's support and advocacy for undocumented students. As the California Student Aid Commission's (CSAC) student representative she participated in a working group that produced a report on the challenges undocumented student encounter while navigating higher education in California. This work is important, but also difficult as it requires the ability to navigate a variety of issues (e.g., immigration status, economic disparities, immigration enforcement, academic opportunities, etc.) that involves experts across different disciplines. Alexis's ability to build relationships with different stakeholders has made her an important contributor to this work. Given these experiences, I have no doubt that Alexis will provide an important point of view to the advisory board. If you have further questions, please contact me at mmurillo2@scu.edu.

Sincerely,

Marco A. Murillo, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor

School of Education and Counseling Psychology

Santa Clara University



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July 25, 2023

Dear Nominations Committee,

I enthusiastically offer this letter in support of Alexis Takagi's nomination to serve on the Cradle to Career Community and Outreach Advisory Board.

I have worked with Alexis for the past year as part of the She Shares mentorship program. Over the past year, I have enjoyed meeting regularly with Alexis to discuss her professional goals, successes, and challenges. It has been a two-way street of exploring, learning, and advising. Our conversations have been especially helpful to me as it relates to navigating generational differences in the workplace and implementation of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives.

Alexis is an excellent communicator. She is clear, confident, and professional in all interactions. She is a great listener and very thoughtful in her interactions. She is very eager to learn, develop, and grow in her professional career. Alexis is very conscientious and ambitious, and someone who wants to create real impact in her work. She is passionate about her community and in engaging the community to ensure all voices are heard and differing perspectives are considered. I greatly admire her poise and professionalism, and how she immediately puts people at ease in her presence.

I whole-heartedly recommend Alexis Takagi to serve on the Cradle to Career Community and Outreach Advisory Board. She is a smart, talented, passionate young woman with a huge heart and tremendous potential who strives to make a difference in all that she does. I have no doubt that Alexis will provide much value to the work of the advisory board.

If there is anything else that I can provide in support of Alexis' nomination, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Keetha Mills
President and CEO
Foundation for California Community Colleges

County of Santa Clara

Office of the County Executive

County Government Center, East Wing
70 West Hedding Street
San Jose, California 95110
(408) 299-5105



July 24, 2023

To Whom this May Concern,

My name is Melissa Luu, and I am a Senior Management Analyst in the Office of Children and Families Policy, located within the County of Santa Clara Office of the County Executive. I am writing to formally recommend Mike Nguyen.

I have had the pleasure of getting acquainted and working closely with Mike through the Youth Task Force (YTF), a representative body of County youth that aims to provide an opportunity for youth to have a formal role in decision-making while assisting and advising the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors and County administration on matters pertaining to youth. Mike was unanimously elected by the YTF Commissioners to serve as the Public Relations Officer, updating communications to the public and spreading awareness of the YTF.

Mike's work on the YTF included authoring the Children's Bill of Rights, which helped set the standard for healthcare, education, and safety for children and young people in the county. He had a vision to expand the YTF profile on social media to encourage the community to be involved in county events and other volunteer opportunities.

During our time together, Mike also displayed extensive leadership skills, passion, and dedication to not only uplift the voices of youth, but also in his work to support the community. In collaboration with the County Registrar of Voters office, Mike has helped to create a civic engagement pipeline for schools in the county, expanding youth engagement by planning school contests, connecting with the Santa Clara County Office of Education, and helping pre-register 16 and 17 year-old youths so they are able to vote. Mike has also helped promote online mail in the Go Green campaign, preventing paper waste and further supporting environmentalism. Additionally, Mike has served as a team leader at Second Harvest of Silicon Valley, engaging over 2,000 volunteers, managing food operation shifts, and giving presentations at volunteer shifts, churches, and local organizations, promoting health equity to groups who did not know it was necessary or even existed in the Silicon Valley.

Mike's enthusiasm to support youth and the community come from his own life experiences. His family, coming from a modest background, emphasized the importance and preservation of food, leading to his close involvement with Second Harvest of Silicon Valley. Having a grandparent with military history led to his passion for public service and community involvement.

Mike is a hard-working student dedicated to supporting and empowering the community through his voice. He has spoken on behalf of disabled students and has confidently advocated for others. His resourcefulness led to his partnership with the County Registrar of Voters office, Second Harvest of Silicon Valley, and participation on the YTF. His passion and perseverance are exemplary qualities that would be a great addition to your work.

Please feel free to contact me at melissa.luu@ceo.sccgov.org if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Melissa Luu
Melissa Luu

Senior Management Analyst, Office of Children and Families Policy

Dear Distinguished Governing Board Members of California's Cradle to Career Data System:

My name is Mike Nguyen, and I wear many different hats in my life - Youth Commissioner of Santa Clara County, Student Member of the County Registrar of Voters, National Advisor to The Kroger Company, and Speaker at Second Harvest of Silicon Valley. I have consistently been a fierce advocate, from educating organizations like Apple to Stanford University Biodesign and bringing youth rights to the forefront of my mission.

Above all this, I am a student and learner, a product of my local Title 1 public schools, a product of De Anza Community College as a dual enrollment student, and an incoming undergraduate at the University of California, Berkeley. This year, I witnessed the college admissions process firsthand, navigating the UC, CSU, and Common Applications, as well as the FAFSA, CSS Profile, and Naviance. To say the road to higher education is simple is an understatement; students must adequately prepare, think critically, and decide for themselves.

I was fortunate enough to be automatically accepted to UC and was named a 2023 U.S. Presidential Scholar Semifinalist by the U.S. Department of Education. To be honest with you, this wouldn't have been possible without support from my counselors, teachers, and community.

However, I understand it's drastically different for millions of students across our state. Schools have limited resources since counselor and teacher support varies, financial aid workshops aren't always accessible, and guidance on supplemental essays is time-consuming. Those who are first-generation and low-income also continue to be disadvantaged. Simply put, every playing field is different, and equitability needs to be provided so all students can reach their true potential in higher education and beyond. Data analytics can change the narrative.

As a first-generation student, I genuinely believe in the power of C2C, and I want to bring my student perspective to the table to advocate and bring our communities into the conversation in a more tight-knit fashion. When communities raise their voices, progress can be made, and accurate, actionable information can be developed. At its heart, C2C's analytics will ensure that students no longer need to dream of who they hope to become. They can interpret this critical data to receive the proper guidance to make their dreams a reality.

My public service has led me up to this moment in time, where I have the chance to make real change happen and provide meaningful insights as a Student Representative for the C2C Community Engagement Advisory Board. Our community matters and education is at stake, but I am confident we can work together to lead students on a pathway to a brighter future.

I greatly appreciate and thank you very much for your consideration,
Mike Nguyen