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Summer 2014



Special Issue on
Working Relationships



Relationships that Work at the English Center

The English Center is created as a result of many successful relationships between coworkers, students, volunteers, and instructors. These relationships cross generations and cultures. See how these remarkable relationships nurture student achievement and engagement. Come to our workshops. Become a speaker, a mentor, or a mock interviewer. There are many ways you can join us. In this issue:

- Working relationships at the English Center
- ["It's All About Confidence" Workshop on July 19](#)
- Corporate Training for Industry: CTI Achievements
- Mock Interviews planned for August 12
- Student Activities
- Partnership with the IRC
- Public Safety and Neighborhood Improvement
- Co-Valedictorians honor the people who helped them
- *Our Declaration*, Language Learning and Critical Thinking



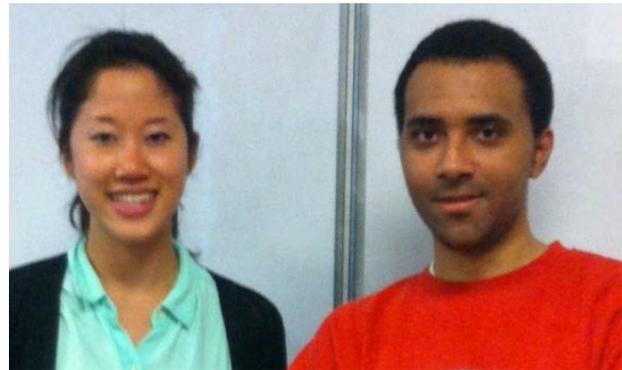
Tony Vigo and Marcy Jackson combined marriage and workplace collaboration.

Marcy Jackson and **Tony Vigo** have combined marriage and workplace collaboration for many years. This summer, Marcy is retiring as Executive Director of the English Center while Tony is retiring as coordinator of International Programs. Because of this working relationship, the

dynamic combination of highly motivated immigrants and internationals makes the Center a unique learning environment. Marcy and Tony have also prepared the English Center for new staff and program development.



Executive Director, **John Tang** and Admissions and Outreach Coordinator, **Karla David** have been working closely together. They are developing new strategies for enrollment and updating marketing materials. They are also working on the details of The English Center's referral program. With new energy and direction, it is a pleasure to work together.



Instructor **Michelle Oppenheim** praises her volunteer teaching assistant, **Andrew Robinson**. They work together in the evening program. Michelle says, "Despite the challenges of teaching multiple levels in the evening, all of our students receive the attention they deserve. Andrew has built great rapport with the students. This makes the class more lively and makes the lesson successful." Andrew will teach in Romania and apply the practical techniques he has learned.



Xuany Wang met volunteer mentor **Christine Lewis** every week to research job openings and discuss employment culture. Christine uses her business experience and M.A. in Marketing to help career students prepare for the job market. In Xuany's valedictorian speech below, she explains why the relationship was so successful: "My tutor, my friend, you worked week after week to help me. You make challenges fun, and you always believe in me."



Bassam Albaraheem studied computer programming in Iraq and worked as an IT professional. At the English Center, he worked with tutor **John Rice**, a retired programmer. Their similar experiences became a bridge to learning English "Working with computers can be a solitary job," says John. "We point and click, often communicating only through automated interactions. In tutoring Mr. Albaraheem, I tried to expand this interchange to a respectful give-and-take. I thank The English Center for its supportive surroundings, where we could explore English together, with confidence and peace of mind."

To become a volunteer job coach, mentor, tutor, teaching assistant, or for special projects, contact [Janice Tolman](#), Volunteer Coordinator.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE TO MAKE A DONATION

Saturday Workshop for New Immigrants: "It's All About Confidence"

July 19th, 10:00 to 1:00, special guest, Liz Archibald

Learn from professionals in global communications. Come build your confidence as a professional. The workshop is open to students, alumni, and community members.

- Liz Archibald, Global Corporate Communications, [CISCO Systems, Inc](#)
- Fatima Aineb, English Center Career Coach
- A video of your mock interview
- An activity workbook
- Lunch and snacks



Contact [Eric Bellis](#), Career Education Coordinator, to learn more and register. Join the workshop

CTI Achievements

Corporate Training for Industry Did you know that the English Center delivers customized training to corporate clients and community organizations all around the Bay Area? New courses and workshops include: Desktop Operating System and PC Support, Wide Area Network Connectivity, Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), and Cloud-Based Computing. For more information, visit our [website](#).



Congratulations to Maria Gomez

Maria Gomez, an employee in the Environmental Services (EVS) department at Highland Hospital in Oakland, was recently named Employee of the Quarter. This summer, Maria and others from EVS, Gardening, and the Dietary departments are participating in CTI's Workplace Essential Skillscourse. The 10-week course is funded by the Educational Fund of her union, SEIU, and taught on site by trainer Susan Silva.



Larry Wexler (center) with Nina and Vladimir

Congratulations go to a new U.S. citizen. Vladimir shared the naturalization ceremony with his wife, Nina and CTI Trainer, Larry Wexler. Larry met the couple at Alta Torre, a Bridge Housing senior affordable housing community in Palo Alto. Alta Torre is one of over half a dozen Bridge Housing communities where The English Center delivers training in ESL, Job Readiness, and Computers.

Mock Interviews Prepare for the Job Search

Students from level 3 career classes practice interviewing for their dream jobs with interviewers from the local business community, who have generously volunteered their time to give our students authentic experience.

The English Center Career Interview Event is coming around again on August 12. Contact [Eric Bellis](#), Career Education Coordinator to volunteer as a mock interviewer.



Harold Dees of the Unity Council interviews first place winner, Jiaming Aki Zhao



Career students feel confident after the mock interview competition

Student Activities



Special thanks to volunteers **Christine Lewis** and **Erin LaNinfa** for providing cakes and crafts to celebrate Spring.



Merhawit Gebreab and **Nadege Kindila Nzita** compare decorations.



On a trip to Downtown Oakland, Intermediate and advanced students met at the Champions for Humanity sculpture for a picnic. They also visited the Botanical Gardens, City Hall, the State Building, and the Federal Building.



Inside Oakland City Hall, **Ghazleh Valizadeh**, **Sarvandari** and **Diana Lovo Martinez** had a great time learning about history and architecture. Best friends from different continents learn together.



A day at Angel Island

Thirty students, instructors, alumni, and volunteers took the ferry from Jack London Square.



Half the students climbed to the top of Mt. Livermore for the amazing view. See more:



Partnership with the IRC for Vocational English

Over the past year, the English Center and the **International Rescue Committee (IRC)** have been building a supportive and rewarding relationship. This collaborative partnership assists immigrants in their English language development and job readiness. As part of an Alameda County grant, students are referred to the IRC and then come to the English Center to improve their English skills. Once the students are ready, they continue in employment services at another partner organization before beginning to work. **Awet Fikadu** and **Togii Dorjjugden** exemplify the hard work and success of many of the program participants. To learn more about this program, contact the AC VESL Coordinator, [April Shandor](#).



VESL students, Awet Fikadu and Togii Dorjjugden received awards for excellence and participation.

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Public Safety and Neighborhood Improvement

Did you know that crime is going down in Oakland? In part, this is because community members are informed and involved. This summer, more than 50 English Center students passed assessments to show that they can call 9-1-1 in an emergency and report non-emergency

crimes to the police. This is in fulfillment of the EL Civics grant from the State of California, Adult Education Office. At the end of the session, an Oakland police officer and the Operations Manager of the new Jack London Improvement District gave a public safety presentation to about 30 students.



Jack London Ambassadors

The [Jack London Improvement District](#) was launched recently. Ambassadors are working to make the district clean, safe, and friendly. You will see them doing great things:

- Public engagement and hospitality
- Deterring and reporting unwanted activities
- Safety escorts (An ambassador will come to walk with you.)
- Helping homeless people
- Cleaning and beautification

We are especially proud of these efforts to improve our neighborhood. English Center students will volunteer to plant trees and flowers on July 17.

Graduation Spring 2014: Co-Validictorians and Friends

"Honor Those who have Helped You" by Xuany Wang

Dear English Center community, families, and friends, good morning, My name is Xuany Wang. I am standing here in front of you, and I am honored and happy to be here. Today, many students will graduate with me. I don't want to say goodbye to any of you.

To me, the English Center has been like a home. It is a small school, and for this reason, we are like a family. Today I want to take a moment to talk about my experience and explain some ways to succeed as students here.

In my first session, I worked in the Career Center with Ms. Angelica Garcia. I helped maintain the database. Every Wednesday afternoon, I helped basic level students do their homework. After tutoring, I worked as a teacher's assistant with Ms. Julia Tran in the computer class. In these volunteer experience, I supported other students and I learned at the same time.

Right now, I am working as an intern in the Port of Oakland in the Social Responsibility Division. I really appreciate working with my supervisors, Ms. Pamela Bell and Ms. Connie Wong. You have given me the best opportunities to challenge myself.



Friends, Xuany Wang and Queenie Wong were co-validictorians this Spring.

Now I can look back on my academic work at the English Center. I see that my classes here have given me much more confidence and the desire to work hard in the future. I believe that all of us now have great opportunities if we have a motivated attitude to learn. Do you agree?

Now it's time to say thank you. I especially thank my teacher Ms. Tolman; you have given me opportunities to learn and think; you taught me to believe in myself and give to others. I want to thank all my teachers, including Eric, April, Susan, Nicole, Sally, and my career counselor Larry. You are all wonderful.

Christine Lewis, my tutor, my friend. You worked week after week to help me. You make challenges fun, and you always believe in me. You are the best!

Next, I would like to thank my good study partner and close friend, Queenie Wong. You are one of the best friends I have ever had. Everyday, we compete and inspire each other. We both like challenges, volunteering, and we both have a very positive attitude to get ahead in our lives.

Finally, I want to thank my husband. I'm so lucky to have a husband who supports me enough to tell me I could choose whatever I want to do.

In closing, dear classmates, I'd like to remind you to honor and remember those who helped you. Look at them around you-- teachers, tutors, coordinators, staff, and internship directors. They care about us and they believed in us. To thank them, we must become the best people that we can be. Thank you and congratulations!



"Just remember, you can't climb the ladder of success with your hands in your pockets." Queenie Wong is now employed at the English Center.

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Language Learning and Critical Thinking

***Our Declaration: A Reading of the Declaration of Independence in Defense of Equality* by Danielle Allen**

Scholar and author, Danielle Allen developed the idea for her new book while teaching adult students basic reading and writing skills. She writes, "Language is one of the most potent resources each of us has for achieving our own political empowerment.... We have to cultivate the capacity of citizens to use language effectively enough to influence the choices we make together."

At the English Center, students participate in democratic processes, and learn the skills of argumentation and critical thinking. This prepares them to participate in any democracy.

[**Our Declaration**](#)



Allen is a professor of social sciences at Princeton University. She writes about justice and citizenship.

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The mission of the English Center is to realize the participation of international women and men in the social, political and economic opportunities of the 21st century world. Through English language, technology and career readiness training, we will foster cross-cultural communication and career advancement, enabling non-native speakers of English to achieve their fullest potential.

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