

**Foothill-De Anza Retirees Association Scholarship**  
**May 2016 Recipients**  
**6 @ \$1,000 (3 at each campus)**

**De Anza**

**Alyssa (De Anza)**

**Major: Liberal Arts**

**My Story**

“It is an honor to meet you,” my current self says to my future self. “You are the woman of my dreams.” As vivid imagery in this visualization isn’t completely transparent, my reasons for why I want this vision to become a reality are. I’ve never had much in terms of financial or family stability. My education is the most valuable thing I have. It is all I have, but it is mine. My college experiences thus far have taught me to use adversity as ammunition to travel a course that not many have the courage to explore. My father allowed Jack Daniels to ruin his life. I lost him to Jack. Depression controlled my mother. I lost her to Zac (prozac). But you know what? I’m breaking the cycle. I’m traveling the course. My college degrees will be an emblem of my perseverance, capability, and authenticity. Transfer to a university will be the catalyst for good things to come. Therefore, I intend to achieve a B.A. in Communications followed by a M.A. I hope to obtain the kind of scholarly experience that places me within a matrix of ideas, dynamics, and opportunities to expand my knowledge and potential both inside the classroom and beyond it. I aim to explore my major by way of research, analysis, and exposure to each layer of my chosen major in order to advance my skill set to give back to the world in a big way. My De Anza Communications professor solidified my eventual promise when she said, “My student has just become my teacher. Someone out there needs what you have.”

Whether it’s through clubs, campus/community involvement, or class projects, I am dedicated to use each experience to shape me for every arena of life to come. De Anza has heightened my traits to make me an asset to join the next group of motivated individuals at the university level. The resources that schools, such as USC, UCLA, or Stanford, contain will allow me to build upon the solid foundation that De Anza has sustained me with. A major in Communications will qualify me to construct ideas through creative collaboration with different teams to bring productive language to fruition. I value that skillfully-used language has the potential to transform difficulties, discontinue fears, and create opportunities as it did for me. I will pursue a career in film/television production to continue to provoke curiosity and captivate audiences through an artistic, communicative approach. I am crazy enough to think I could change the world, one conversation at a time. With that being said, I desire to be of service to a variety of people and belong to any student organization whose mission is to affect change in a society that gets comfortable with mediocrity. I’m transferring because I’m trying to be the woman, I needed growing up, that I didn’t have. This leads me to the memory of meeting a powerful woman named Dr. Angela Davis on the De Anza campus. I remember drinking her words in as if I was dehydrated in the middle of a desert. Her words go beyond my capacity to dream of anything more powerful: “I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change. I am changing the things I cannot accept.” This, in turn, inspired the quote I wrote and live by: “Don’t just do what you CAN. Do what you CAN’T.” It is my greatest objective to achieve this

feat of doing what I used to think I could not do: become a college graduate – the first in my family tree.

As I transition from my current self to my future self, I hope I can look at her in the mirror one day and say, “I’ve become the woman of my dreams.” Without the help of financial aid services, I don’t know how school would be possible. It’s been the stable ground under me that I’ve never had before. I’m so thankful because any portion helps me to survive another day. I’m having a difficult time trying to pay for school fees, books/materials, and living expenses. This is due to the fact that I’m not currently receiving financial aid because it is in the process of appeal. Because I’ve taken a variety of classes before I narrowed down my major, I am told that I am one unit over the limit you can have to receive financial aid in community college. I also am not able to continue my work-study job on campus because of the financial aid appeal. Therefore, I literally don’t have any income coming in. This truth is hard to swallow because, unfortunately, I’m not one of those students who had it all figured out in the beginning. And even if I did, I didn’t have the financial means to do so. It’s been a struggle every step of the way. I had to explore various classes to choose my major and, now, I am so close to transferring into that major, but I am being penalized for it when it comes to financial help. I understand the policy and I still have no regrets because each class has taught me something valuable that I can take with me to the next chapter of my life. I am just in need of help. I had to drop out of school for a while before to make ends meet for my family and I.

I don’t want to drop out or put school on hold again. I hope my educational record reflects that I work hard and don’t take my education lightly, especially when I’m being given financial help to finish college. It’s been a very tough journey battling financial hardship, being homeless, and working through the aftermath of abuse, but one day I won’t be poor anymore. I will be rich in knowledge and my education will be the currency.

### **Gregory (De Anza)**

#### **Major: Biological Sciences**

#### **My Story**

The dream I had of attending a university immediately following high school along with the rest of my peers was dashed when my single mother made it clear to me that I could either incur massive student debt upon myself or go to a community college. Truth be told, before receiving admission decisions from universities during my senior year, I hadn’t given community college a second thought. After all, in high school it was widely stereotyped as a place where slackers and high school dropouts go to, that it’s a place that doesn’t foster any intellectual thinking like prestigious universities do. What I’ve found, however, is nothing at all what I imagined, and in a good way. De Anza may not be perfect, but after spending more than a year here, there are opportunities available if you can find them. Of course, I did not get the arguably overhyped freshman dormitory experience by continuing to live at home until I transfer, but that does not matter to me anymore. Not only am I saving money, but I’m provided with the opportunity to test out the skills I picked up in high school in lower division classes close to home before undertaking tougher upper division courses.

Ever since I can remember I’ve had a deep passion for science. My rationalist way of thought finds science intuitive and generally easy to comprehend. That’s not to say that I get bored of it easily. No, in fact, it’s one of the few areas of study where I actually enjoy

going back and relearning material and then attempting to connect it to the world around me. Though it's always been a constant in my life, my appreciation for science was spurred by my AP classes in high school; AP Chemistry and Biology to be exact were the catalysts that made me appreciate the scientific process even more. Before undertaking these courses, I had bad habits of not studying well, one factor that made me take APs in the first place. And even though chemistry itself was possibly one of the toughest classes thus far in my academic career, it ironically made me want to study harder instead of quitting early. With the material still fresh in my mind after the class, AP Biology is what reinforced my decision to major in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology; a perfect balance of both subjects that I have found to be the perfect major to match my interests in biology.

Perhaps my declining performance in middle school and early on in high school pushed me to study harder, and eventually made me realize that I had much more potential than I was showing. It is fortunate that I have a mother who cares enough to devote a large majority of her time and energy to helping me stay ahead in everything that I do. Not only has she been able to overcome a rough patch in her life following my parents' divorce when I was in seventh grade, but in that time she managed to keep on working so that she and I could have a place to live. Hailing from a middle class family with only one major source of income and steadily getting by from paycheck to paycheck is already a tough situation, but ever since my mom lost her job of seven years more than a year ago, it has been steadily tougher to make ends meet. Education is something that my mother and I both value very much, but with recent financial circumstances it is still up in the air about how I will manage to pay for my schooling when the time comes for me to transfer to a pricier 4-year institution next fall.

Only recently have I realized just how important an education is, and I intend to use both my knowledge and study skills that I have been able to develop through high school and at De Anza so far in order to one day reach my goals of obtaining a Bachelors, and still later graduating from dental school. In terms of how I plan to obtain these two degrees, I'm already approved for TAG to UC Davis for next year. The bitter pang of rejection from UCD burned within me up until the point that I received my TAG notification, and was one of the driving forces that kept me constantly motivated to do my best even when I felt like giving up. Now that I'm on track to transfer to the school I have now set my sights on finishing strong here at De Anza and then preparing myself for the last two years needed for me to obtain a degree.

During my time here, I've joined the Honors Program here at De Anza to further challenge myself, and was elected as the VP of Academics with a STEM concentration for this academic year. My desire to gain more lab experience drove me to volunteer in the stockroom of the biology department in the science center. The skills I learned during my time there provided enrichment that added into my Bio 6B course, and will hopefully be of great use at any summer internships which I may land in the future. Whatever path I may take to get the final result of a bachelor's, I've realized what matters more is what you do with what life throws at you. Just like work in science is influenced by the path a certain process takes, so is my path to my goals influenced by my decisions and my study habits.

**Bao (De Anza)****Major: Biological Sciences****My Story**

As an aspiring physician, I wish that I could copy and paste the whole medical school checklist as my submission. I could tell you about how my love for medicine started when I was five and how I always try to help people. Yet, I did not write such checklist, nor did I pursue medicine to help people. I chose medicine, because it is an evolving field that I want to commit myself to a lifelong learning process. I love the idea of being constantly challenged and of being a part of the revolution. Another factor that led me to medicine is the entwined human interaction. While working as a cashier at Wal-mart, I very much enjoyed interacting with people, and in education, the factor greatly enhances my drive to succeed. Learning the class material as a tutor for my struggling friends has increased my understanding of the subject and motivated me to connect with my teacher. I hope that my enthusiasm for medicine will push the field to a new front.

To achieve such dream, I learned to take the change in my own hands. Whether it's helping at my local hospital, or conversing with healthcare providers at health conferences, I actively seek out for any exposure in the field. I began to attend talks on body abnormalities like aneurysm and how they are diagnosed and treated. In school, I engage in class lectures, chatting with professors about concepts that intrigue me. I embrace education as a self-enrichment process.

Yet college is not just an access to higher education but also a mean to survive. The quarterly reimbursement helps filling the monthly financial void and kept me in school. From the weekly grocery, vehicle insurance to the rent for an overpopulated garage for our family of five, financial aid made it possible for money to be the second priority. In addition, I am exposed to the art of multi-tasking, juggling exams while translating paperwork for my parents as well as running errands. I learned to manage my time better, squeezing in any study time before I come home. "Divide and conquer" has become a skill that helps to keep my balance of school and family.

As a long term goal, I plan to support my mother, who sacrificed her own opportunities to help the family, to be integrated in society. Being able to directly express her thoughts without the need of a translator is utmost important. Convincing my mother to learn English has been very difficult, but she is now more comfortable with the idea. While driving her to the supermarket, I occasionally demonstrate to her the skills that will free her from the house's four walls and be more social. Finally, obtaining the U.S. citizenship will help her regain the self-confidence that she has lost after many years of the ongoing, patriarchal marriage.

## Foothill

### **Max (Foothill)**

#### **Major: Psychology for Transfer**

#### **My Story**

Over the years I have found myself developing in ways I never assumed I would. High school graduation in 2012 marked what I thought would be a turning point in my life. I finally assumed I had “arrived.” I was heading to UC Davis, accepted into their Undergraduate Honors Program, a member of National Scholarship Federation, and the California Scholarship Federation. These successes hallmarked significant progress for me. In 2009 my mother and I were homeless. We had always lived with my grandmother, and after she kicked us out, my mother and I spent my freshman year of high school living in her car. Still, academics were an outlet for me; studying kept me sane. Amidst all this, my mother’s alcoholism prevented me from emotionally growing. I developed a severe eating disorder that required numerous hospitalizations. Still, I progressed. By my senior year in high school I recovered, was treasurer of student council, and eventually an AP Scholar. Going to UC Davis, I assumed was the end to trauma. When I started my freshman year of college, though, the eating disorder took over again. I spent the next two years in and out of treatment centers and therapists’ offices.

It wasn’t until I found Foothill College that my love of school invoked in me passion to continue on my path of academic success and personal fulfillment. I started Foothill in January 2014 and immediately fell in love with the teachers, campus, students, and classes. Today I am fully self-supporting, and I see my life moving in so many positive directions because I found my place, my “spot” at Foothill. Money still poses a challenge. I pay rent and am in the process of moving. My parents remain absent, both physically and for financial support. I pay out of pocket for psychotherapy, medication, and outpatient treatment to maintain recovery in my eating disorder along with basic student expenses and the cost of living my myself; and this recovery and new life isn’t always perfect, but every time I open my textbook I am reminded of what academic success will bring me: a future. That is something that’s kept me chugging forward. I believe in my capabilities enough to face the problems of the present in order to create a meaningful future. Foothill continues to inspire me every time I park my car at 5AM in parking lot 2, to have the next 4 hours before my 10AM class to study.

My eager participation in lectures soon grew into conversations with English professors, additional readings for psychology courses, and endless annotations in textbooks. Coffee shops became a new haven for hours of studying. In my statistics course, these efforts created opportunity: Because of my high performance taking Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences, I was selected as the first embedded tutor for the course. I work closely with instructors and students, developing lessons to teach and lecture. Through this collaboration, I not only reinforce my knowledge of introductory statistics content, but I am also compelled to offer meaningful instruction to increase student understanding. I seek to make this course more tangible and offer guidance through a student lens. Interacting with my peers informs how I structure learning objectives to improve their experience in statistics and guides my own study habits. I have matured through professors’ mentorship,

which lends quality to my tutoring and passion to continue the learning process for others. I seek academic challenges to develop awareness and grow as a leader.

In the Stanford Psychophysiology Lab, being a research assistant has proven invaluable, whether I am creating coding metrics, adhering to ethical research, or analyzing data. This assistantship allows me to expand critical thinking, engage in scientific discovery, and contribute to a larger framework of social justice. I am invested in providing conscience in my research, following moral principles that govern my role in the Stanford community and study in empirical inquiry. This opportunity not only aligns with my pursuit as a psychology major, but also humanizes the learning experience, establishing lasting relationships with professors who inspire my own academic career. I aim to pursue a doctorate in clinical psychology, conduct research on effective interventions for chronic eating disorders, and expand the literature for this population. My experience is a testament to the daily suffering these individuals endure, and we desperately need a treatment tailored to decrease ambivalence for change and increase motivation for lasting recovery. Compassion for this suffering drives my own explorations in research and diligence in the classroom.

Coming to Foothill became a safe haven for me through investing in the classroom. I participated in classroom lectures, spent hours in coffee shops faithfully reading each chapter in my textbooks, and took on opportunities outside the classroom. Today, I am working with Dr. Eta Lin conducting my own research study investigating the body dissatisfaction process and serve as V.P. of Activities in the psychology club. Earning a 3.9 GPA is a testament to my growth. Attending Foothill College has been one of the wisest, most rewarding decisions I have ever made. Today, I aspire to attend U.C. Berkeley, determined to earn my Ph.D. in clinical psychology and contribute in research. I have already been accepted to the Claremont Colleges and Santa Clara University. These are feats I previously assumed not within my grasp because of a difficult home environment. I am an independent, self-supporting student, no longer associated with my mother because of her own mental illnesses. These hardships, however, no longer run my life, and I am determined to make a difference in my community.

## **Mingzhuo (Foothill)**

### **Major: Economics**

#### **My Story**

For as long as I've known what I really want to do in the future, my passion for Economics has grown stronger and stronger. Now I'm studying at Foothill College, majoring in Economics. Throughout high school and college thus far, I have taken rigorous curriculum and maintained 4.0 GPA. I have explicit short-term and long-term plans for future and I think I'm the best candidate for this scholarship.

I'm currently taking transfer-level courses and plan to transfer to UC Berkeley this year. Then I hope to get my Bachelor of Science degree after two years in the economics program. I'm interested in environmental economics and ultimately want to be an environmental economist working for international organizations. I'd like to introduce advanced theories to some developing countries that are suffering from the problems brought from unhealthy economic structure.

Even though I am only 20, I have already had many firsthand experiences with economics. During a tough period living with my elderly grandma, I had to shoulder the financial burden to make ends meet. That's the beginning of my path towards economics world. When I was in middle school, I was the accountant of the whole class. So I tried to make every dollar of our class fund go to the most useful place.

But I quickly realized I only had some shallow views about economics. In high school, I launched a project called "Economics and life", through our team's cooperation and exploration, my horizon was broadened and I grasped some essential parts of economics. Before this project, I never thought new energy was so significant in changing the national economic structure until one of my teammates showed us Chinese energy shortage problem: we rely too much on coal to satisfy the growing need for energy consumption which brings heavy air pollution. As a result of unsuitable use of energy, new energy is strongly needed to solve the problem which is restricting economic development. Inflected by his aspiration, at the first time, I began to realize economic is not only a small and practical unit for making money as I had thought. I was so concerned and interested in the environmental economics and decided to begin my path towards environmental economics.

I have to thank my role model Jack ma who gives me courage to chase my dream. Jack ma who is the chairman of Alibaba uses B2B E-commerce to boost the prosperity of Alibaba which is a combination of Ebay, Paypal and Amazon. When I recall his speeches at Columbia University, Stanford University and Tsinghua University, I remind myself again and again: as a wild dreamer, go forth to meet the shadowy future, without fear. Considering my financial situation, I need some money support from scholarship. I worked for the Foothill College Student Government as a budget analyst and a business operation specialist for two quarters. Now I'm the Vice President of Foothill Chinese Student Union. Also I am applying for the fund development associate at Sustainable Silicon Valley. I am also a long-term volunteer at PTA Terman and a non-profit organization in Palo Alto: Neighbors Helping Neighbors. However, I've met with many obstacles on my path. The biggest obstacle that I'm concerned with mostly is the meal expense and rent expense. I have to spend lots of time on my study and activities, so sometimes when I have to eat at Café on campus, the meal price is so high that I cannot afford it. As is known to all, the rent around Foothill College is rising quickly these days. Even my big family have squeezed into a small one-bedroom apartment, it's still hard for us to afford it. So I'd like to get some support for my meal and my rent, then I can do more things efficiently.

I have the confidence to overcome these obstacles with your generous help. When I recall the days past and dream of the bright future, I didn't regret and a voice from my deep heart remind me: You can do more! Economics accompanies me growing up. I'm infatuated with the changeable market. I feel it's my responsibility to deal with various frauds in market. I think healthy economy can benefit daily life, environment and a country's development. It's significant and worthwhile for me to contribute my efforts in economics.

**Merrissa (Missy) (Foothill)**

**Major: Psychology for Transfer**

**My Story**

It all started with a dream. A dream for a higher education; for a way out of poverty, and a way out of an inevitable world of statistics. Though I've lived and learned through much adversity in my young life so far, my beautiful struggle is uniquely my own. I feel I am an instrument for a greater purpose than myself. Without all the obstacles and pain I would not be strong enough to make my dreams come true. Where there's a will there will always be a way. With hard work, dedication, faith, and help from others who believe in me, I will make my dream of becoming a counselor for at-risk youth real.

I have always loved school but growing up in poverty and the system I didn't have the same privilege of the whole 'school experience' as my peers did throughout my youth. Now as an adult I finally have control over my life and I have learned it is my responsibility to make my dreams come true. School has always been very important to me especially because I was deprived of it. I am determined to graduate from UC Santa Cruz with a Bachelor's Degree. With neither my parents or my older brother a high school graduate, my drive for a high school diploma was born. I became the first in my family to earn a high school diploma, the first to go to college and I will be the first to graduate from UC Santa Cruz. I chose to attend Foothill College because while growing up in the system Steve Mitchell, a staff at the San Mateo County Juvenile Hall and prior staff at Foothill, always encouraged me to pursue a higher education at Foothill. I am a Psychology major and I plan to transfer to UC Santa Cruz to complete my education. Once I graduate I plan to work in the San Mateo County Juvenile Hall. There I will work with at-risk youth who share the same struggle as I do. Through my life experiences and my compassion, I will inspire youth as well as adults, to believe in themselves, to believe that they too can accomplish a greater future than statistically proven. My ultimate goal is to open a group home with an art therapy program for youth affected by poverty, violence, gangs, drugs and abuse.

Growing up I did not really have guidance in my home. My father passed away when I was just 1 1/2, his family out of my life for the next 16 years. My mother a strong woman working two jobs, raising two kids and taking care of my grandmother who was mentally ill. With no real guidance growing up I ended up in juvenile hall when I was just 11. After a few run-ins with the law I was taken from my home and sent into the Foster Care System. From age 11 to 18 I went to 10 different group homes and 12 different high schools. When I finally reached age 18 I was released from the system with no real skills to survive, just the expectation to fail, to become another statistic, I did not accept that. I worked hard to get my life straight and learn to survive in the 'real world'. I learned not only how to take care of myself for the better but also to grow, to flourish, and create a movement everyone and anyone can build on.

Last year I went to San Mateo Adult School and earned my High School Diploma. There I also won a scholarship to go to college, in that moment I knew I was going to make it. I had the first graduation ever in my life and my dream to become a counselor was ignited. At the time I was working full-time at Google. When I first got into Google I was working as a dishwasher in one of the cafes. With hard work 2 years later I became a Facilities Maintenance Technician. I was on my way to becoming an electrician, but I was not satisfied. I felt that was not my purpose nor my destiny. Everything I have been through is for a reason. So I decided to make the biggest decision of my life. I left Google as a Certified Lighting Technician to go to school full-time at Foothill to become a counselor for at-risk youth. In order to get anywhere you need to start somewhere, so since starting school at Foothill I have been working at the Community Ambassadors Program on campus as a Peer Assistant. Over the summer I was promoted to Peer Assistant II and took on the responsibility as the lead of the Outreach Team. Not only do I learn to establish positive

relationships with my peers, gain leadership skills and outreach experience, it also helps me with my financial need. I alone am my sole financial supporter. Since I do not have support from family I need help paying for books, classes, supplies and help with rent. I do not own a car but I always find a way to make things work, I just have to work for it, like I should.

Through all the obstacles I have triumphed over in life so far I learned this mission, this movement is bigger than myself. In order to change the world and break the cycle, we must first change ourselves. We must first become the change we wish to see in the world. I have come a long way since I was a kid on the streets with just a dream for a better life. That dream has evolved to breaking this cycle many are born into. That dream is fueling my mission to create a revolution to better our world as a whole. With an education my voice will be heard. My voice and mission will gain power and inspiration. With an education I will set my mind free and become the example kids can follow. By letting my own light shine it automatically liberates others to do the same. I would like to end this by sharing my journey at Foothill so far. This is my 4th Quarter here at Foothill, I have earned all A's since starting and I currently have a 3.9 GPA. I look forward to continue to grow academically and professionally through my continuous involvement in events at school. I have grown to appreciate the way my struggle and resilience inspires everyone around me. I am thankful for all the love and support from faculty and staff here at Foothill.