

“ . . . The Sankofa principle conveys the idea that you cannot move forward without knowing where you have come from.”

## Annual Conference Highlights

The Umoja VI Conference was a two-day event at which the Umoja students “ran the show.” It was through their hard work and careful planning that faculty learned much about the boundaries that exist in the classroom, how to spice up a new lesson, how to learn from students and ask them for help and much more. Students were determined to provide a fun and creative space for faculty members to generate ideas and products. The main goal of the Umoja students was to contribute to the success of other students by working with faculty to create solutions to a multiplicity of issues in the classroom. They used workshops, such as the one written about below, to work toward that goal.

### Inside the Rhythm of Similarity: Collaboration in the Classroom— Cedric Roberson, Jr.

When first asked to participate in the conference, I was all gung-ho. I had not realized that the task at hand would take a great amount of dedication and time. We had meetings every Friday (all day), homework, and critical thinking was expected. Our task was to shape the content of the conference and, to do that, we needed to break up the different workshops and create ideas on how to approach each topic. Nonetheless, doing these different tasks enabled us to better understand what faculty goes through to prepare for their classes. If we were trying to teach the teachers, we had to become them, and I believe this process allowed us to do that.

In my workshop, I was given the opportunity to teach and re-emphasize the importance of collaboration in the classroom. We wanted to acknowledge the barriers that separated teachers and students. Our thought was that both the student and teacher have a passion for learning and a purpose for being in the classroom and sometimes barriers such as fear, isolation and judgment mask the passion that could contribute to a positive learning experience. We integrated a video of “Walk This Way,” by Aerosmith and Run DMC into the presentation,

as well as class discussion and group work to illustrate that there are many different teaching methods that can be used in a classroom to keep things interesting. All of the lessons and illustrations used in this classroom were used to bring about a sense of marriage/unity between teachers and students.

The workshop also gave teachers and students a chance to hear each other on a professional level. We did not only want the different barriers in the classroom to be stated; our main goal was to stimulate cross talk between the two groups, teachers and students, to help find a solution to overcoming those barriers.



Cedric Roberson, Jr. sharing Student Voices Patch Quilt at Umoja Village Fair

The Umoja VI Conference gave students and teachers the opportunity to switch roles and at times, such as in workshops like mine, gave them the opportunity to all become the same—equal. I believe that teachers and students began to see each other as peers and benefit from it. This conference empowered the mute, by giving everyone a chance to speak their mind as a way to contribute to fixing the problems in the classroom.

For more insight into what happened at the Umoja VI Conference, please view our short video at: <http://www.vimeo.com/18735240>.

## Umoja Goes SOLO

This spring, the Umoja TSP Program at San Diego City College initiated a mentorship program focused on the empowerment of women. Sister’s Overcoming Life’s Obstacles (SOLO) was introduced to Umoja San Diego by Leadership Excellence, Inc. in Oakland. They have been an Umoja Community partner over the years and have played a vital role in setting the tone at the Umoja Community Summer Learning Institute. In San Diego, SOLO is a sisterhood geared toward the complete advancement of women. Our mission is to better ourselves, the women around us, and to develop the communities in which we live. We accomplish this through community outreach and personal development activities. We believe that if we honor ourselves spiritually, mentally, and physically we can and will have successful relationships with our families, friends, and our community. We are united together by life’s journey with a bond that supersedes cultural differences, political stands, and social injustices. SOLO has enabled the Umoja TSP Program at San Diego City College to extend the spirit of unity to other women on our campus and in our community. Umoja student, Angela Dance, is the president and co-founder of SOLO at San Diego City College.



Guest speaker, model Sherelle Edwards, and her assistant demonstrate on-the-go exercise tips as part of their workshop on being Fit and Fabulous in 2011.

# Long Beach Sankofa Scholars Awarded Grant

## SAVE THE DATE

Regionals—March 11th—  
De Anza College and  
April 8th—San Diego City  
College

Umoja Scholarship  
Deadline—March 11th

Summer Learning Institute  
June 27-29, 2011  
Kellogg Center—Pomona,  
California

Umoja VII Conference—  
Sacramento—  
November 4-5, 2011

## Umoja Governing Board 2009-2011

Teresa Aldredge  
Debbie Anthony  
Erin Charlens  
Donna Colondres  
Tom deWit  
Judy Mays  
Jeri Marshall  
Jennifer Mendoza  
A'Kilah Moore  
E. Elaine Moore  
Clyde Phillips  
Matthew Powell

Umoja is a grassroots effort by concerned faculty, staff and students who have been working to help improve the success rates of African American and other California Community College students.

It's not every day that you meet someone who is truly in a position to help your program financially, but a chance encounter two (2) years ago yielded the SANKOFA Scholars Program at Long Beach City College a \$5,000 grant.

In meeting Shivaun Jones, an engineer from Boeing of California at a community event, Debra Peterson (SANKOFA Scholars Coordinator) didn't realize that she was talking to an alumna of Long Beach City College. A warm-hearted conversation about the SANKOFA Scholars Program led Mrs. Jones to say that she wished that a program supporting African American students existed when she was an undergraduate. Mrs. Jones' educational path included attending LBCC and graduating from USC.

A few days later, Ms. Peterson received a call from Mrs. Jones asking for more information about the SANKOFA Scholars Program. As a regular contributor to the Boeing Employee Community Fund, Mrs. Jones requested that the SANKOFA Scholars Program

be considered for a grant. Ms. Peterson followed up by submitting an application to the Boeing Employees Community Fund through the LBCC Foundation.

Months passed and one Saturday evening while dining with friends, Ms. Peterson received a text message from Mrs. Jones that simply read, "Call me as soon as possible."

The excited tone of the text message was no match for the news that followed. The SANKOFA Scholars Program was awarded the grant. "I am so grateful to Mrs. Jones for having such a high level of confidence in our program. I often refer to Mrs. Jones as our SANKOFA Angel," said Ms. Peterson.

Debra Peterson offers the following advise to all Umoja Programs:

1. If given an opportunity, talk about your program to anyone who will listen at community or charity events. Giving hearts travel in the same circles.
2. When writing the grant, let go of the outcome. The

relationship with your Program's advocate or prospective donor is the most important thing to focus on.

3. Look for other funding sources with 6-12 months of receiving a grant. A grant award from a major company or foundation always helps in the vetting process.

4. Write a heart-felt thank you letter and present a plaque that will serve as a reminder of how truly grateful you and your students are to have received a grant.

5. When you write your grant report, include pictures of the students involved in the activities/events that the grant funded.

6. Talk to the students in your program (over and over again) about the importance of charitable giving. Involve your students in community service projects that allow them to feel good about helping others. They will soon become alumnus of your program and college. A quality experience in your program may yield many financial blessings in the years to come.

## VA Ed. Secretary Returns to El Camino College

The Education Secretary for the State of Virginia has a connection to the Umoja community in California.

Gerard Robinson started his higher education at El Camino College in Torrance, California in 1984. As a Business Administration major, Mr. Robinson met frequently with Elaine Moore for academic and career guidance. "Gerard was always a serious and focused young man who demonstrated outstanding leadership qualities. I was impressed with his maturity and his high intellect," says

his former counselor.

Gerard was not in Project Success, an Umoja affiliated program, only because it had not yet been created. However, just prior to obtaining his Associate degree and transferring to Howard University, Mr. Robinson gave a motivational pep talk to the inaugural group of Project Success students, followed by leading the students on a campus tour. Gerard returned to El Camino soon after to speak at a Project Success Awards Dinner.

After graduating from Howard, Gerard obtained his Masters degree from Harvard University. A strong supporter of Charter Schools, he served as president of the Black Alliance for Education Opinions prior to his appointment as Secretary of Education for the State of Virginia.

Gerard Robinson will be the Keynote Speaker at the Project Success 25th Anniversary Awards Dinner on June 21, 2012.

## Forging Partnerships with HBCUs

Elaine Moore and Teresa Aldredge, Umoja Community board members, participated in a tour of eight Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). The campuses that were visited included Morehouse, Spelman, Clark Atlanta, Paine, Johnson C. Smith, North Carolina A&T, Hampton, and Howard Universities.

All of the institutions were very interested in the development of Transfer Admissions Agreements that would increase the pipeline of students who are a little older and have already established a successful college track record.

As a result of the tour and follow-up communications, Transfer Admissions Guarantee Agreements were established between El Camino College and Morehouse, Clark

Atlanta, Hampton, and Johnson C. Smith. Two Transfer Priority Consideration Agreements were established between El Camino College and Howard University and Spelman College.

All Umoja affiliated colleges are encouraged to follow the El Camino College template to develop their own agreements with Historically Black Colleges and Universities. If your campus is interested in developing TAGs and TAPs with HBCUs, contact Elaine Moore at [emoore@elcamino college.edu](mailto:emoore@elcamino college.edu).

The Umoja Community will continue to expand outreach efforts to greatly increase the number of Transfer Agreements. Umoja is excited about these new partnerships and will investigate other opportunities such as summer bridge programs and a special out-

reach to transfer students majoring in Engineering, Science, Math, Allied Health, and Business.

The Black College Tour was lead by Dr. Yasmin Delahoussaye, Educational Student Tours Coordinator, who had already developed a number of Articulation Agreements between HBCUs and the nine-member Los Angeles Community College District. "Yasmin had already established contacts and relationships with key people at the colleges and universities, which made our job easy," reported Elaine Moore.

The 25-person tour included six Umoja students. Two of the students received on-site admissions to Paine College and Johnson C. Smith University.

## Board Members in Washington, D.C.

Elaine Moore and Tom deWit, Umoja Community board members, attended the annual Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Conference in Washington, D.C. this past April. The conference entitled, "Moving Towards HBCU Cathedrals," has been held for over 20 years and serves as a platform to increase federal agency support, pursue new and productive partnerships with the private sector, and to create initiatives to deepen and broaden the strengths of HBCUs. Over 70 HBCU presidents attended the conference, as well as a host of provosts and other administrators.

The first morning of the conference, HBCU presidents attended a brief meeting with President Obama at the White House. The Obama administration, through Executive Order 13521, has granted HBCUs \$3.2 billion in Pell Grants over the next decade and \$2.55 billion in funding for HBCUs and Hispanic Serving Institutions. They have

also been given a mandate to increase enrollment and graduation rates.

A host of impressive speakers presided at the various conference panels and plenary sessions, including Dr. John Wilson, Jr., Executive Director of the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities; the Honorable Martha Kanter, Under Secretary, U.S. Department of Education; Bill Corr, Deputy Secretary, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; and the Honorable James E. Clyburn, Majority Whip for the 111th Congress U.S. House of Representatives.

At one open session, Elaine Moore introduced the Umoja Community to the audience and expressed a desire for partnerships between California Community Colleges and HBCUs to help meet the need to expand HBCU enrollment. A large number of HBCUs expressed interest in partnering with California Community Colleges, partly because of the high number of California students already attending their universities.

The Umoja Community would like to thank Meta Williams from the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO), one of the Umoja Community partners, and Dr. John Wilson for extending an invitation to the Umoja Community to attend such a prestigious conference.



*U.S. Capitol Building  
Washington, D.C.*

## Friend Requested—Umoja now on Facebook

In 2009, the Umoja Community went live on facebook. With nearly 170 followers, fans of the Umoja Community facebook page can keep up to date on upcoming events, share the latest news, and give a “shout out” to friends. Thanks, facebook, for allowing the Umoja Community to build a culture of community and support without boundaries. If you’d like to join us on facebook, please go to [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) and search for Umoja Community.



[www.umojacommunity.org](http://www.umojacommunity.org)