

## Pittsburg High Counselors Promote Rossmoor Scholarships

When talking with Melanie Mosely and Elizabeth Espinosa at the Pittsburg High School (PHS) College and Career Center, it is obvious PHS students are in excellent hands. Their office is filled with signs of their students' successes: pennants from over 50 colleges, photographs of scholarship recipients, and a colorful poster featuring the twenty students who received 2025 Rossmoor Scholarship Foundation (RSF) awards in 2025.

Pittsburg High graduates 90% of its roughly 800-member senior class each year. Nearly 200 apply for scholarships and approximately 55% eventually pursue higher education in a 2-year community or 4-year college. Many others choose trade and technical certificates and vocational programs.

Most Pittsburg students' paths are complicated by socio-economic factors; 76% of PHS students are economically disadvantaged. The high school's minority enrollment is 90% and 100% of students qualify for free lunch. Many students care for younger siblings and work to help support their families. Most are the first in their families to pursue a college education.

Mosely and Espinosa begin guiding students through the maze of available opportunities in students' sophomore year -- identifying strengths and interests, recommending appropriate classes, jobs, and internships, advising on standardized testing, organizing visits to state colleges, and running college and career nights as well as family workshops on financial aid. That they have been successful is obvious. In 2025, 80% of PHS students who applied received awards totaling more than \$70,000; more than \$474,000 was awarded to 127 students attending six high schools and two community colleges.

PHS currently ranks number three in California for completed Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) applications—a fact that demonstrates just how proactive Mosely and Espinosa are with their students. PHS students are required to complete FAFSA applications—also required by RSF—before they can submit any college applications. “Our most promising students are proactive, responsible, have a strong sense of commitment to their education, and understand that there is life after high school,” states Mosely proudly. Espinosa explains they also work with “parents to teach their children to advocate for themselves.”

RSF scholarships are highly sought by PHS students as application criteria are easy to understand and the process is similar to other sponsored PHS scholarships offered through the College and Career Center. Students and their families are recognized in April of their senior year at the school's Honors Night, and at the RSF Awards Ceremony in May.

In his RSF application Jhonathan Davila Escorza wrote that his mother worked as a house cleaner, and his father, who worked as a floor installer, “did not make it past high school. Not taking his education seriously was his biggest regret and he did not want me to repeat his mistake.” Inspired by “the sacrifices my parents made, I have thrived as a first-generation Hispanic student.” He is currently attending UC-Davis. In her personal essay, Diana Torres Arias writes, “Diagnosed with an atrial septal defect and cleft lip and palate at birth” meant numerous surgeries at great financial expense. The many hardships she endured “sparked a growing interest and passion for the life sciences and understanding the complexities of the healthcare system.” She plans to become a “pediatric nurse practitioner, helping dismantle institutional barriers.” She is currently attending CSU-Chico.

Submitted by: Julie Allen, RSF Trustee