



EDUCATIONAL
OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM
CSU BAKERSFIELD



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Connection Empowerment Belonging

Three EOP Students On Being Published for the First Time

"You have been assigned this mountain to show others it can be moved." Alejandra Campoverdi, *First Gen: A Memoir*

Of the 2024 cohort of incoming EOP students at CSUB, less than 5% were Arts and Humanities majors. For many first-generation students, pursuing the arts is a risk, the type of gamble our households have taught us to avoid. Thus, creative writers contort themselves like gymnasts to become engineers; the theater kid who aspires to Broadway finds themselves singing to patients in an ICU; students in love with poetry study machine language instead. This week, we trace the common arc of three first-generation students challenging this phenomenon by publishing their creative works for the first time.

Initially, Keyera feared the competition; Rafa was anxious about the language barrier; Alani was on the verge of withdrawing her submission altogether. For all three, this would be their first time submitting to a university publication. For one, it would be their first time even sharing their work. "[My work] is something I keep dear to me, so I've never exposed it, let alone to such a large degree, to thousands of people in a university," Alani said. However, all three recognized publishing as a necessary step in their development. "You have a choice, but if you really think about it, you don't really have a choice if you want to flourish and see the growth and where you'll be as an artist. You have to make the jump to really put yourself out there," Keyera explains. All three students would go on to have their work accepted and published in *Orpheus*, a CSUB literary journal.

Keyera expressed her satisfaction with seeing her work published for the first time, stating that it brought her a sense of pride, accomplishment, and connection to other like-minded individuals; Alani expressed the sense of empowerment sharing their work led to, and looks forward to submitting again this year to see how much she has grown; Rafa described the sense of belonging he felt not only seeing his work published but also when attending an event where all the published artists were allowed to present their works to each other.

We cannot always see what lies beyond the summit of our fears, cannot always overcome the resulting paralysis. Some of us may need to float in a liminal space a bit longer than others, but we must all eventually cross thresholds in order to flourish. For EOP students, it is never a question of ability. "It is a leap of faith," Rafa explains, "*crean en lo que hagan...* believe in what you're doing." From their new vantage point, Keyera, Alani, and Rafa can now attest to the connection, empowerment, and belonging to be found on the other side of our own perceived inferiority; it is illustrative of why first-generation students simply cannot afford *not* to take risks. EOP thanks all three students for illuminating the path for all of us.

Orpheus is now accepting submissions for 2025-2026. All submissions are due March 1st. All majors are welcome.

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