

The Wonder Women of Pittsburg High

“Our kids are rock stars!” crows Melanie Mosely, Pittsburg High School’s Senior College and Career Technician.

The successes Mosely and her colleague Elizabeth Espinosa help facilitate each year through the school’s Office of Career and College Counseling justify her enthusiasm. Thanks to their guidance, last year the Rossmoor Scholarship Foundation (RSF) interview team met with 39 Pittsburg students. Sixteen received awards totaling more than \$60,000.00 -- Pittsburg qualified for more awards than any other high school that partners with RSF. Overall, more than \$340,000 was awarded to 82 students attending six high schools and two community colleges.

Pittsburg High graduates 91% of its roughly 800-member senior class each year. Nearly 200 apply for scholarships, and approximately 22% eventually complete Bachelor’s degrees. Many others pursue trade and technical certificates and vocational programs.

Many Pittsburg students’ paths are complicated by socio-economic factors. Sixty-one percent of the city’s 76,000 residents are economically disadvantaged. The high school’s minority enrollment is 90%. 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 Espinoza 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, among other topics.

Espinosa was once in her students’ shoes. Brought to the U.S. by undocumented parents at the age of four, Espinosa later sought guidance from a high school counselor who predicted she would probably drop out and begin a family. She now holds an M.A. in Education. Mosely came to PHS first as a Parent and Family Liaison, expanding engagement opportunities and building stronger school-family partnerships. She has served as Senior College and Career Technician for the past six years. Her motivation to work in education came from the desire to guide her own children through their transition from private to public schools.

Submitted by Walter Barr, RSF Trustee