

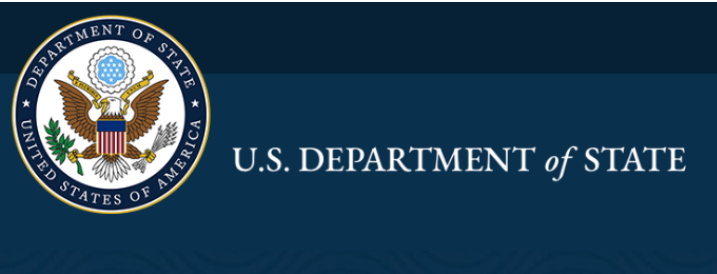


# Board of Trustees Report



October 8, 2024

Dr. David M. Johnson, President



On Thursday, September 26, we had the great honor of hosting Yesterday, we had the honor of hosting the Ms. Zakiya Carr Johnson, who currently serves as the U.S. Department of State Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer. Raised in East Palo Alto, Ms. Carr Johnson traveled from Washington, D.C. to our campus to share with our students the civil service employment opportunities that are available to them. She was accompanied by her team: Public Relations Officer Mr. Rob Dooling, Legal Advisor Ms. Eura Cherry, and the Northern California Diplomat in Residence, Ms. Susan Wong. The event was exceptionally well-attended, with more than 100 students participating. This was in no small part to the support of our faculty members, who encouraged and allowed their students to attend this event. The participation of the faculty and the insightful questions posed by our students underscore the importance of such events in fostering diverse perspectives in all aspects of education. And special thanks to Dean of Counseling and Equity Angela Khoo for leading the event!

*Merritt College puts students first. Through our rich educational programs, we foster a culture of equity and inclusion that empowers students to achieve their greatest potential and make meaningful contributions to their respective communities and our global society.*

# LATINE HERITAGE MONTH

In keeping with our events and celebrations during Latine Heritage Month, on Wednesday, September 29th, Merritt College hosted Dr. Alberto Ledesma, author and illustrator of the book *Diary of a Reluctant Dreamer*. Dr. Ledesma gave an inspiring talk about his journey from being an undocumented youth growing up in Oakland, to his inspirations for writing and creative arts. Dr. Ledesma currently serves as the Assistant Dean for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

at UC Berkeley's College of Letters & Science, and is actively working on his next book/illustration project. This event was a collaboration between Merritt's ASPIRA Project (Title V Hispanic Serving Institution Grant) and the Puente Program. Our *Puentistas* are reading his book in their class his semester.

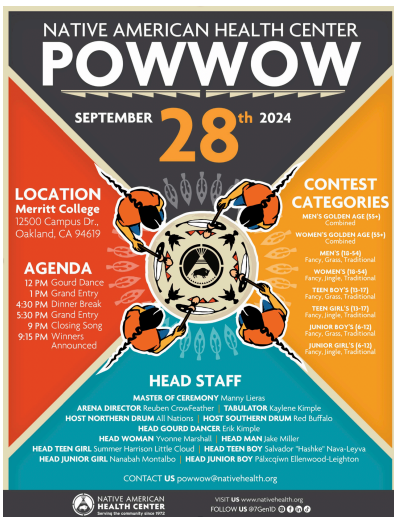


Merritt's former entomological expert instructor Brad Balukjian (given his eleven years here, we still consider him part of the family) has made the College proud. In his current role as a Research Associate with the California Academy of Sciences, Brad made national news recently with his discovery of seventeen new species of plant bugs that he discovered in Tahiti. What made the discovery noteworthy is the fact that he has named one of the species of insects

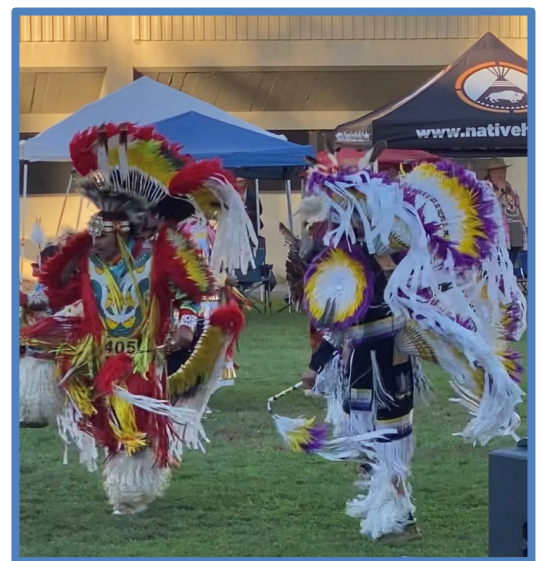
*Pseudoloxops kamalaharrisae*, a respectful nod to Vice President Kamala Harris. Brad chose the name as an acknowledgement of VP Harris's efforts to highlight environmental issues during her time in the United States Senate. He has also shared with media outlets the success of Merritt's Natural History and Sustainability Program, which has placed dozens of our graduates in jobs with the East Bay Regional parks, California State Parks, environmental consulting firms, and non-profit organizations. Good work, Brad!



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After a hiatus of a couple of years, Merritt College was proud once again to host the Native American Health Center Powwow on September 28. What attendees experienced was a vibrant and deeply sacred gathering, rooted in the traditions of Indigenous peoples of this region. It was more than a celebration—it was the expression of cultural resilience, pride, and community on full display! As one of the elders explained, the rhythmic drums were symbolic of the heartbeat of the earth, and movement, song, and prayer honors ancestors, while fostering connections among tribes and with the land. Put simply, the event was a powerful reminder of the enduring strength of Indigenous culture, where the past, present, and future came together in a shared, sacred space.



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