A graduate of Garfield High School and the University of Washington, Viché’s journey is illustrative. As she is quick to admit, “I struggled throughout the program, especially with my grades. I was disengaged and unwilling to work hard. I could be pretty negative.”

During her middle and high school years when she struggled the most, “no matter how challenging or unresponsive I was, my counselors (Jennifer Ward and Jolenta Coleman Bush) never gave up on me. They were always there for me. They believed in me.” As her guides and role models, they kept Viché on “the path” and helped her finish her academic career with strength. And instilled in her, as she says, a purpose “to give back to other students – to be what Jennifer and Joey were for me.”

Viché now has responsibility for close to 60 students in 15 public and private high schools. She meets with them at least once a month. The meetings are relatively short, so Viché checks in advance on a student’s academic work to make sure assignments are completed and grades maintained.

If there are no significant problems, most of the meeting is spent listening, tuning in to the emotional rhythms of each person. Her scholars respect the fact that Viché is a Rainier Scholar. “Because I have gone through the program and dealt with the same stuff they have, the students trust me and that gives me a greater chance of being heard.”

For her 10th graders, Viché will follow them for three years, counseling them about classes chosen, tests taken, colleges selected, financial aid packages submitted, and, in the end, which college they choose. Viché will not just be there for these educational and emotional milestones, but also for the day-to-day “stuff” that Viché says actually constitutes the bulk of her meetings. As one navigates a long distance, being off target just a little bit every day will lead to a very different destination. Each step in the right direction is important. They all lead – one day, one month, one year at a time – to completing the journey. That is why it is important to have a companion keeping an eye out for what lies ahead. The road is long and at times confusing, but at Rainier Scholars, as Viché knows first-hand, you’ll never walk alone.
Teaming Up with the Seattle Seahawks!

By Mary Bristow

In our rookie season as a Spirit of 12 Partner, Rainier Scholars provided over 100 volunteers at two Seahawks home games, demonstrating the power of teamwork and community. Distributing GameDay magazines with the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation matching every dollar raised, scholars and families had a unique opportunity to “give back” to a life-changing organization.

Reflecting on a season of highs and lows, many similarities are evident between our hometown football team and a cohort of Rainier Scholars. Last year our youngest scholars created a compare and contrast study of Seahawks Coach Pete Carroll’s Win Forever framework with the Rainier Scholars program. The common goal of each approach is clear – work to maximize your potential. From performance to environment to guiding beliefs, the scholars were able to create their own pyramid of success.

Coach Pete Carroll says, “If you want to win forever, always compete.” At Rainier Scholars we believe – if you want to graduate from college, stay on the path, always work hard.

We both know if you want to succeed, keep trying, never give up.

Pyramid of Success

Performance
Know you are going to college.
Know you are going to succeed.

Environment
Lift those around you.
Always try to be your best despite things around you.
Be willing to take risks. Have hope.

Philosophy
Every failure, mistake or success is a lesson.
Think smart. Make smart choices.
Believe in yourself.
It’s not about the talent – it’s about the work.
Give your all. Do more than you can do.

Beliefs
Never give up, no excuses.
It’s all about the work.
Effort counts. Persevere.
Look out for each other. Be a team.
Work together. You are stronger that way.
Work Hard, Make Friends

By Tom Moore

Five years ago a rising seventh grader stood in front of 1,000 people at our annual luncheon at the Seattle Sheraton Hotel and said, “Hello, my name is Kevin Martinez. I am a hard worker, a friend to everyone, and a Rainier Scholar.” Since that time, nothing, and everything, has changed for Kevin.

On the “everything” side, Kevin graduates from high school at The Bush School, one of Seattle’s highly regarded independent schools, in June. He has applied to ten colleges and hopes to attend either Amherst, Pomona, the University of Rochester or UW to pursue his dream of becoming a neurologist-neuroscientist.

Kevin has excelled at Bush academically and through extracurricular activities. He is one of two peer-elected senior officers in school government and in his freshman year he volunteered with Team Feed, an organization focused on feeding the homeless. He’s also a member of the school’s environmental club and heads up the spirit and social committees.

Maybe even more important, Kevin has proven to himself that “you can come from this completely different place – being of color and from a different socio-economic level – to succeed and feel comfortable in an academically challenging environment.” Kevin gives credit for this to a “sense of empowerment” inculcated by Rainier Scholars and the wide range of opportunities and inspirational teaching offered at The Bush School.

I see a difference in myself and I am excited to see what the future will hold.

Kevin Martinez

Making friends comes easily to Kevin, but the impact goes deeper than popularity. It is actually a marker of leadership, one tying back into an openness – to other people, their views and feelings – that Kevin values so highly. To describe how it works, he uses the phrase “leading from the foot of the table – (it is a place where) you are not the focus of attention, but have a confidence in what you are doing and get results.”

It is a world view Kevin has hewed to closely over the years. As that 12-year-old facing a ballroom full of people, he had the confidence to say, “I see a difference in myself and I am excited to see what the future will hold.” Now, five years later, he remains confident – this time in the future that college holds for him. And who would doubt him? This is the student, after all, who says with a straight face, “There hasn’t been a day when I did not want to go to school!”

What hasn’t changed is trusting in an ethos established when he was 10: “work hard and make friends.” It sounds simple – maybe even simplistic – but in practice it has been life-changing. Working hard is easier, as Kevin says, when one remains open “to learning new things every day and then when one of those things really interests you, you go deeper with it, to really study it.” Take for example, the Chinese language class he chose freshman year because he thought it would be a good challenge. Four years later he is holding down an A- average and singing Chinese songs.
Meet Our Newest Board Trustees

Rod Jones first connected with Rainier Scholars by taking a program tour to see our scholars and teachers in action. From that day on, he was inspired to become more involved. “I have been thoroughly impressed by the passion, effort and commitment of the students, faculty, staff and board. Experiencing the scholars firsthand fully engaged in a classroom experience made me ask ‘how can I help?’”

Rod is deeply invested in STEM education and supporting academic opportunities for youth. Whether serving as a mentor, a Board Member with the Bellevue Schools Foundation or as an Advisory Board Member for the UW Bothell’s School of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, Rod believes strengthening academic organizations will have a lasting and positive impact on students.

Rod is President and CEO of Battery Power Systems LLC. He graduated magna cum laude from the University of Michigan and has an MS in Mechanical Engineering from Stanford University and an MBA from MIT. He resides in Bellevue with his wife, Tara, and two sons.

Sujal Patel first learned of Rainier Scholars as a luncheon guest of Andy Jassy, Board Trustee and quickly became more involved in the organization. He and his wife Meera have supported the work of Rainier Scholars for many years through their family foundation.

Sujal is passionate about technology and the possibilities it holds for future generations. As a father of young children, he is inspired by opportunities for youth that expand their ability to learn and use emerging technologies.

“The work that Rainier Scholars is doing not only provides a pathway to college for hard-working students of color, but ensures that scholars have a strong grounding in a STEM education. I am inspired by their mission and committed to their success.”

Sujal founded Isilon Systems in 2001 and currently holds 19 patents in the areas of storage, networking and media delivery.

In addition to Rainier Scholars, he also serves on the Board of Directors at ExtraHop Networks and Qumulo.

Sarah Smith, Executive Director
Spring 2016

Program Updates

Recruitment and Academic Enrichment Phase (AEP) (6th grade)
- Rainier Scholars continues to generate great interest from our community. This year we received 609 total applicants for Cohort XV, a 26% increase over prior years.
- Demonstrating perseverance and hard work, we applaud the 53 students in Cohort XIV who continue steadily forward, and represent a nearly 85% retention rate in this class.
- All students and families in AEP are exploring their options for a college preparatory setting in public or private school. This year, 80% of our scholars applied for admission to independent schools and await placement results this spring.

Academic Counseling and Support Services (ACSS) (7th–9th grade)
- 71% of our rising ninth graders were admitted to independent/parochial schools for the 2016-17 school year.
- Building on the success of our African American boys group, the ACSS team launched the start of Ashia Circle, a program partnership designed to strengthen and support African American girls on their educational journey.
- Our reading seminar class is challenging students to build skills with a focus on college prep text analysis. Attendance and participation ensure students meet college readiness standards.

Leadership Development (LD) (10th–12th grade)
- Our graduating high school seniors have submitted 335 applications to 129 different colleges and universities. Our scholars eagerly await college acceptance results.
- For all 11th graders, our six-week ACT prep course runs February–April. We continue to have a strong turnout demonstrating the investment of our scholars in achieving strong scores that will impact their college options.
- Nearly 40 scholars attended one of three Leadership retreat sessions held over President’s Day weekend. Scholars tackled many topics, developing and testing their leadership skills, and presenting an analysis of issues impacting educational equity in Seattle.

College Support (CS) (freshmen–seniors)
- Our CS team will spend much of the spring conducting campus visits to meet with and support our college freshmen. Plans to visit scholars here in Washington State and across the country include Morehouse, Macalester, Scripps, Columbia, Franklin and Marshall, WWU, Gonzaga and many more.
- Internship cycle is in full swing after completion of career development activities including resume review and mock interviews. We anticipate facilitating placement of 65-75 scholar-interns in a variety of sectors across the region.
- Post-graduation employment plans for the Class of 2016 continue to emerge with offers accepted at Liberty Mutual, Morgan Stanley, Amazon, Cascadia Consulting and Venture for America, to name a few.
An Invitation from the Rainier Scholars Board of Trustees
We cordially invite you to our annual signature fundraising event celebrating college admissions and honoring our 2016 college graduates

Rainier Scholars Annual Luncheon

Wednesday, April 20, 2016  |  Registration 11:30 am  |  Luncheon 12:00–1:30 pm
Sheraton Seattle Grand Ballroom  |  1400 Sixth Avenue

Featuring: Stories from the Journey  |  Lives of Leadership – Video Presentation
To join us: rsvp@rainierscholars.org or call 206.838.6678

Our country and our world are crying out for a new generation of leaders…
leaders who represent diverse backgrounds and share common core values of intelligence, integrity, perseverance and wisdom.

Sarah Smith
Executive Director, Rainier Scholars

Rainier Scholars Board of Directors

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