

2022/23

# Annual Report



MOUNT  
TAMALPAIS  
COLLEGE

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# Dear Friends,

I am delighted to share Mount Tamalpais College's newest Annual Report. As you'll see, this year we made remarkable strides in further building out the institutional infrastructure to support our academic programs, student advising and support services, educational technology and library resources, and alumni support, among other critical areas of work.

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We are thrilled at the prospect of such a rare opportunity to expand our impact.

In March of this year, Governor Gavin Newsom announced an initiative to transform San Quentin State Prison into a model rehabilitative institution. I am grateful to have been invited to serve on the advisory committee for this initiative, which has been charged with drafting a report that outlines its key recommendations. One of the initiative's goals is to expand available classroom space at San Quentin within two years, so that programs such as ours can dramatically increase the number of people they serve.

We are thrilled at the prospect of such a rare opportunity to expand our impact. And given the work we have accomplished over the past few years, this occasion could not have come at a better moment. The ambitious timeline for progress has created a compelling framework for the work that now lies

ahead for Mount Tamalpais College, as we prepare to further expand course offerings, increase enrollment, and build out other key programs and services.

Our work at San Quentin over the last two decades has taught us so much about how to pivot, whether it be to adapt to an obstacle, grasp the complexities of new challenges, or seize an unexpected opportunity. The one piece of knowledge that remains constant is the fact that our ability to continually evolve, adapt, and respond is possible only because of the resources and independence afforded to us by the deep and lasting support of our community.

We hope this report offers you a substantive glimpse into the brilliance, productivity, and generosity of the Mount Tamalpais College community, and allows you to imagine the vast potential landscape of what is still to come. No matter how much we accomplish, it seems we are also always just getting started.

With gratitude,

Jody Lewen, PhD  
*President, Mount Tamalpais College*



# Strength in Independence

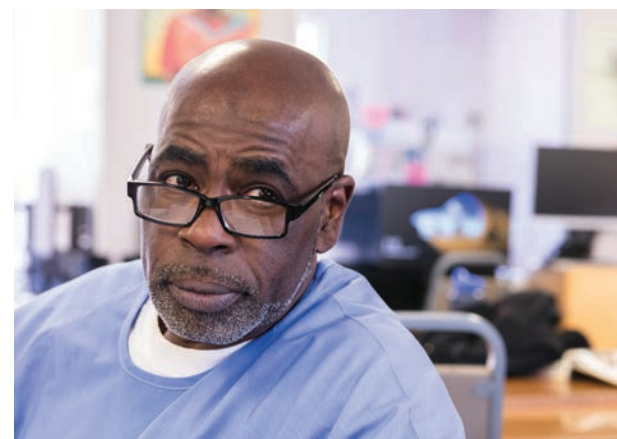
We spent the 2022-2023 academic year strengthening our program and reaching for new heights.

Since achieving independent accreditation, we have built out our academic leadership team to support faculty as they continuously improve curriculum, instruction, and student support, using data from our institutional research as a guide. This team has created new infrastructure and systems to adapt to the many challenges of operating a college inside a prison, resulting in more comprehensive and individualized support for students, and increased support and community-building opportunities for faculty. All of our efforts in these areas have benefited from our status as an independent institution, and from the fact that we are funded by private philanthropy.

This year, **136 INDIVIDUALS VOLUNTEERED** over **10,400 HOURS** to course preparation and instruction, and **238 STUDENTS ENROLLED** in at least one course. Throughout this period of change we have remained, as ever, committed to our mission of delivering a world-class education to students at San Quentin State Prison.

## SAN QUENTIN IN THE NEWS

In spring of 2023, Governor Newsom announced an initiative to “transform San Quentin into the nation’s most innovative rehabilitation facility.” The long-term vision is a scalable model that can be replicated at other California prisons. As a longstanding champion of educational programming in prisons, MTC Founder and President Jody Lewen is now serving on the advisory board of this initiative—one of many ways MTC supports expanded opportunities for learning and growth for incarcerated people in California.



## Students enroll at MTC for a variety of reasons...

- “For general self-improvement”
- “To obtain an AA degree”
- “To keep busy and productive”
- “To prepare for transfer to a Bachelor’s Program”
- “For my kids”



# Information Is Essential: Computer Lab & Library Services

## A HUB FOR LEARNING AND CONNECTION

Thanks to both years of advocacy within the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation and critical donor support, the computer lab at Mount Tamalpais College is now a hub for learning and connection, buzzing with activity in the afternoons and evenings. Students work on laptops, while faculty and peer lab assistants move around the room to help students navigate the computers, conduct research, and gain computer literacy.

Opened in February 2021, the lab moved to a larger space in 2022 and saw the addition of **2-3 PEER LAB ASSISTANTS** to every shift to ensure that all students have sufficient individualized support. We also piloted a **LONG-TERM COMPUTER USE PROGRAM** with **30 STUDENTS**, providing them with the opportunity to check out laptops for the entire semester for use anywhere, including in their housing units. The expansion of our library services included a pilot use of Canvas (an online learning platform), information literacy workshops, and new partnerships with San Jose State University's Information Science School and the Marin County Free Library.

"I've had so many students in the Computer Lab tell me they've never touched a computer before or they've never used the internet," says Amy Brunson, Director of Library Services and Educational Technology at MTC. "When you're in prison, you don't have ready access to reliable information all the time. It's important that students have access to computers to find information for themselves." Internet access is mediated at San Quentin, meaning that only a handful of websites are accessible. Among these are an academic research database and a search engine that allows incarcerated individuals to find social services, re-entry organizations, and employment opportunities in their communities.



"I want to help people use technology as a vehicle to open up other opportunities. I have buddies who have gotten out and I've seen that their lack of comfort with technology is a huge barrier. I grew up in Silicon Valley and am fortunate to have computer skills. When I learned of the need for Peer Lab Assistants, I saw an opportunity to serve this community so that that barrier is minimized."

**HENOK RUFAEL**  
Peer Lab Assistant



## Computer Lab Growth

2022/2023

**↑ 61%  
Lab Use**

The number of students using the computer lab increased substantially this academic year, thanks to expanded capacity.

**↑ 88%  
Workshops**

113 students took at least one computer skills workshop this year, up from just 13 students in 2021/22.

## Lab Capacity

Moving the lab to a larger space this year allowed us to host and support more students at a time.

## Laptops

The number of laptops available to students in the computer lab more than doubled this year.



# Creating a Continuum of Support

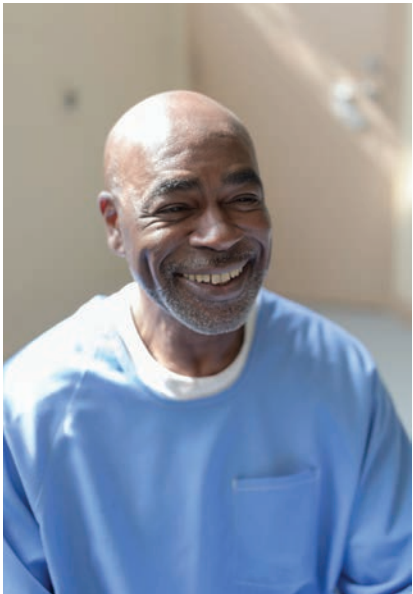
## STUDENT SERVICES TEAM OFFERS WRAPAROUND SUPPORT

This year marked significant growth in our wraparound support for students thanks to a full Student Services team, including a Director of Advising and Student Services, a Learning Specialist, and an Alumni Affairs Associate. These positions allow us to better meet all students' individual needs through college preparatory offerings, advising, tutoring, learning support, and access to resources after graduation and beyond.

Our Student Services staff address learning disabilities, physical disabilities, college transfer needs, parole planning, and more. Our Learning Specialist also offers training and resources to faculty on teaching with a trauma-informed and student-centered lens. Over the past year, the Student Services staff provided almost **200 ADVISING SESSIONS** to students to assist with academic pathways, transfer planning, learning support, preparing for parole, and connection with needed services.

## ADDRESSING COMPLEX CHALLENGES

The learning challenges that so many MTC students face are often directly or indirectly related to earlier experiences of trauma. Our most recent available data tells us that 92% of MTC students surveyed had a gap in their earlier schooling—often caused by instability at home, by disciplinary problems, or by financial issues that required them to get a job and leave school. Almost 90% had directly experienced violence or abuse while growing up. Nearly 50% had experienced homelessness. More than 36% had prolonged or repeated experiences of hunger prior to incarceration, and 33% of students reported that they either had been diagnosed with a learning disability or suspected that they had one. These types of challenges make the need for individualized support—which we know is transformational in any educational setting—all the more essential here.



“Tutoring helped me pass Algebra by providing me additional help outside the fast-paced classroom. Tutoring helped my confidence and self esteem, and gave me the courage to step into the classroom with a positive mindset. If it were not for MTC tutoring I would not have passed the course.”

**GREGORY ESKRIDGE**, Current MTC Student



# Students Lead Through Research

This year brought great momentum and enthusiasm for research on campus. In addition to our college-wide focus on gathering data and assessing our educational efficacy to support continuous improvement, Mount Tamalpais College students have developed and led their own research projects in a variety of fields.

## COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH

In the fall of 2022, MTC offered a new course, *SSC 280: Community-Based Research*. In this class, students honed their skills in the mechanics of crafting a research paper, conducting surveys, and presenting findings. Student research tackled topics including the impact of **OVERCROWDING IN PRISON** (by Keith Carter), **WATER ISSUES AT SAN QUENTIN** (Gerald Morgan), and the efficacy of **REHABILITATION PROGRAMS FOR YOUTH OFFENDERS** (Miguel Sifuentes and Ray Howard).

## NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON HIGHER EDUCATION IN PRISON

Based on their work this school year, a cohort of MTC students, with support from Dr. Noel Vest, are co-creating a presentation that will be shown at this year's National Conference on Higher Education in Prison (NCHEP) in November. Their presentation is called "Barriers and Facilitators to Research Conducted in Prisons: insights from students incarcerated at San Quentin Prison."

Two additional MTC students will also present research projects for NCHEP: "Transformative Gaming Initiative: Harnessing the unique power of games to create a more enriching and rehabilitative prison environment" by Kai Bannon; and "An Exploration of How Climate Change Reforms Can Be Harnessed to Reduce Recidivism" by Kelton O'Connor (abstract at right).



# Hypothesizing links between perceived meaning in employment and the value of employment as a recidivism deterrent – with attention to climate justice.

by Kelton O'Connor

Higher education in correctional settings seeks to prepare incarcerated people for successful careers, on the assumption that success in the workplace will translate to reduced recidivism. While education itself appears to have an impact on recidivism, most research shows the type of employment offered to returning citizens does not. Only when jobs offer a good living wage and social connectivity do they appear to have minor impact on recidivism<sup>1</sup>.

Improving the value of employment as a deterrent to recidivism is important to decarceration and societal healing. This paper hypothesizes the deterrent effect can be increased by improving the perceived meaningfulness of work. This author is unaware of research that investigates this hypothesis, however some studies indicate perceived meaning in work impacts worker satisfaction<sup>2</sup>, mental well-being<sup>3</sup>, and workforce turnover<sup>4</sup>. This suggests educators should introduce incarcerated people to career paths that employees more commonly find deeply meaningful.

This paper introduces the term "Meaning Potential" and presents climate justice work as a case study in the assessment of Meaning Potential. Predicting occurrences of "self actualization" is difficult, however approximating jobs that are more likely to be perceived as "service to others" is feasible. This lays the basis for assessment of Meaning Potential, and indicates that climate justice and public safety may sometimes be a common pursuit.

This paper blends advocacy with scholarship by naming existing climate courses that should be taught behind bars. Specifically, the Sustainable and Just Future course developed by Sage Lenier while at UC Berkeley, and the Sea Forester curriculum, co-designed by this author.

1 Schnepel, K; Do post-prison job opportunities reduce recidivism? Increasing the availability of high-quality job opportunities can reduce recidivism among released prisoners

2 Pratt, MG, et al; Fostering meaningfulness in working and at work; Open Source at [www.researchgate.net](http://www.researchgate.net)

3 Arnold, KA, et al; Transformational leadership and psychological well-being: the mediating role of meaningful work; Journal of Occupational Health Psychology

4 Scroggins, W; Antecedents and Outcomes of Experienced Meaningful Work: A Person-Job Fit Perspective; Open Source at [www.researchgate.net](http://www.researchgate.net)

AND

Arnaud-Nicolas, C, et al; Perceived Work Conditions and Turnover Intentions: The Mediating Role of Meaning of Work; 12 May 2016 Business, Psychology Frontiers in Psychology

**ABSTRACT** for a research project by MTC student Kelton O'Connor, to be presented at the NCHEP conference in November.





CHANTHON BUN

**“One thing that I’m doing today** is giving back to my community. In my spare time, I like to go fishing, camping, and spend time with family.”



**“The future is Ghana!**

TOMMY “SHAKUR” ROSS



KERRY RUDD

**“I have excelled out here in society,** setting company records in sales and lead generation. I directly attribute these measures to the programs I attended inside.”



MARCUS BLEVINS

**“I find hope in recovery** by accepting the challenge to divest myself of the rigors of addiction.”



JAMES EVANS

**“I enjoy being able to do anything I want** after being incarcerated for 28 years. I found myself in a world where everything has changed. It hasn't been easy and I am still learning, but it doesn't matter because I'm free.”



SIMON LIU

**“What is important to me is family, friends, and fighting for justice.”**



WILSON NGUYEN

**“I’m grateful and enjoying the little things in life.”**



RAIVEON WOODEN

**“I’m a supportive person and am always eager to learn.”**

# Living Free

In the summer of 2023, we invited paroled alumni to contribute to an installation inside the prison called the Freedom Wall, which features photographs of alumni who have been released. We asked participants to share a glimpse of their lives, answering the questions: *What is most important to you in your life today? What do you want others to know about who you are?*





JOHNNY GOMEZ

**“My life right now consists of working and taking care of my mom.** She is not able to walk. I have to get her out of bed, feed her, and all the other stuff she needs.”



PHILLIPE KELLY

**“I am a genuine supporter of higher education and developing critical thinking skills.**

I’m always down to help folks, create opportunities to improve the lives of young people, and to be of service.”



RAHSAAN THOMAS

**“I’m a writer, filmmaker, consulting producer and podcaster** known as ‘New York’ on the Ear Hustle podcast. I’m the executive director of Empowerment Avenue and the director of Friendly Signs, using media to empower system-impacted people.”

MTC alumni contribute to their communities in countless ways and under diverse circumstances. Many alumni also serve in leadership roles inside San Quentin, develop and participate in extra curricular activities, and continue to take classes as lifelong learners.



NGHIEP "KE" LAM

**“Education is an essential part of who I am** and the legacy I want to leave behind. Every day is a learning experience. My passions are mechanical problem solving, or sharing my experience to help someone else with their project.”



DANIEL LINN

**“To all of you who are doing deep internal work on yourself, I am proud of you. It is worth it and you are worth it.”**



ORLANDO HARRIS

**“What's important to me is my connection to family, honesty and integrity.** I like to help those that are marginalized, homeless, or disenfranchised in the community.”



DANNY PLUNKETT

**“I am determined to be a part of the solutions to the problems facing humanity.”**





DWAYNE JONES

**“I want to help all my brothers coming home succeed.** My family is important to me. I love to fish, bowl, and have family outings.”



AARON TAYLOR

**“If you know me, you know I'm building.** I'm building to bring respect to our community, formerly incarcerated Americans.”



WAYNE BOATWRIGHT

**“I label myself a ‘returning citizen,’ aspiring to be a constructive member of my community again.** I accept my journey, though I may not fully comprehend it.”



RON EHDE

**“I start every day with prayer,** Bible, and encouraging devotional readings. It took me three prior prison terms and a life sentence to finally realize that complete abstinence from drugs and alcohol and a relationship with God are the solutions to my problems.”



RUBEN RAMIREZ

**“What I cherish the most** is the enlightenment that I've received through education and programs that allowed me to be a better person in my relationships with others.



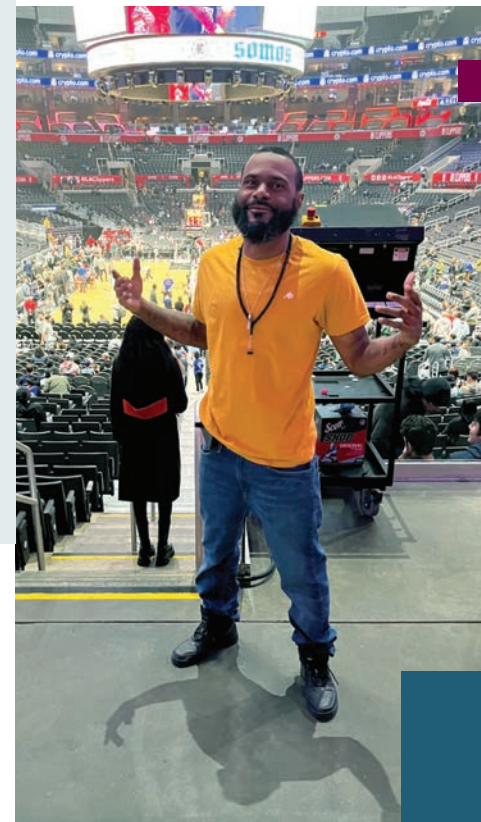
ANTHONY ANDERSON

**“I'm grateful for all of life's lessons.** I try to exercise patience in everyday life.”



JAMES CAVITT

**“I'm a passionate leader and social justice advocate** who believes in the power of education and one's ability to change.”



JOSHUA BURTON

**“What is important to me is staying balanced** in my faith and walk as a Muslim, family, and creating better opportunities in my community. In my spare time I enjoy outdoor activities, creating videos, and spending time with family and friends.”

Over the last year, we have expanded our reach and deepened our connection to MTC's alumni community. Through outreach as soon as students are released from San Quentin—and by maintaining regular contact and helping make connections to jobs, housing, and resources—Alumni Affairs Associate Corey McNeil fosters an increasingly cohesive network among hundreds of former students.





Phoeun You, with English-language students, in his classroom in Cambodia.

# Never Go At It Alone

Alumnus Phoeun You on Community, Critical Thinking, and Hope

For Mount Tamalpais College alumni who return home, the journey through the prison gates and beyond can be rife with uncertainty and obstacles. Alumnus Phoeun You experienced a version of this that was different, but not rare; after serving 25 years, he was released from San Quentin directly into the custody of ICE agents. He was immediately deported to Cambodia, the country he fled as a refugee at just one year old.

Nearly 8,000 California prison parolees have been deported between 2018 and 2022. In You's case, it was just two days before he was supposed to be released that he learned he would be sent to a country where he didn't speak the language and didn't know a soul—a loneliness he would have to navigate alongside the usual challenges of adapting to a changed world after decades of incarceration.

A community quickly rallied around You in the face of his likely deportation. The campaign for You to receive a pardon from Governor Newsom received national media attention, and was fueled by the organizing efforts of the Asian Prisoner Support Community, the Asian Law Center, API Rise, Interfaith for Human Integrity, and others, including many individuals with whom he had crossed paths through the San Quentin News and Mount Tamalpais College.

The hardest part, You shared with us on the one-year anniversary of his arrival in Cambodia, is being so far away from this community. He wishes he could thank his advocates in person, with a hug or a handshake or over a meal. Instead, he communicates with that support network virtually from the other side of the world.

After a year of emotional highs and lows he's starting to see the value in his fight to remain in the U.S., even if it didn't change the outcome. "I can look back and say, this is the impact you left on people's lives," You says. "I knew that the law says that you have committed a crime, and you're not a U.S. citizen, so therefore you are deportable. But I decided to accept the fight, the hope that was still there because of other people. People who had the courage to say we're not giving up on you—those are the times when I felt uplifted. That's the gift that people gave me."

You describes a similar sense of being cared for when he first started college at MTC. He recalls how when he was reluctant to fully devote himself to his studies,

"the Mt. Tam staff didn't let up. And after a while I thought, you know, if these people really care for me that much, then I owe it to myself to at least give it a try. And I kept coming back."

When asked what skills he gained from college, You was quick to respond.

"Two words: critical thinking." This skill has proved immeasurably valuable in his current situation. "It taught me to see life as more than what it is, to look beyond, as far beyond as you can. Critical thinking has helped me find inner freedom. And when I find inner freedom, my visions of the future get clearer."

While education has long been important to You, he never imagined that it would one day lead to his new job in Cambodia: teaching English to students ages 13 to 18. This is a full circle moment. "I'd been away from school for such a long time before MTC, and when I started I was like man, forget this. But then, there was the constant pushing. Not pushing in a bad way, pushing in support. Like hey,

I didn't see you in class, where were you? In a time and place where I felt like 'why do I matter?' people gave their time and energy to show me support."

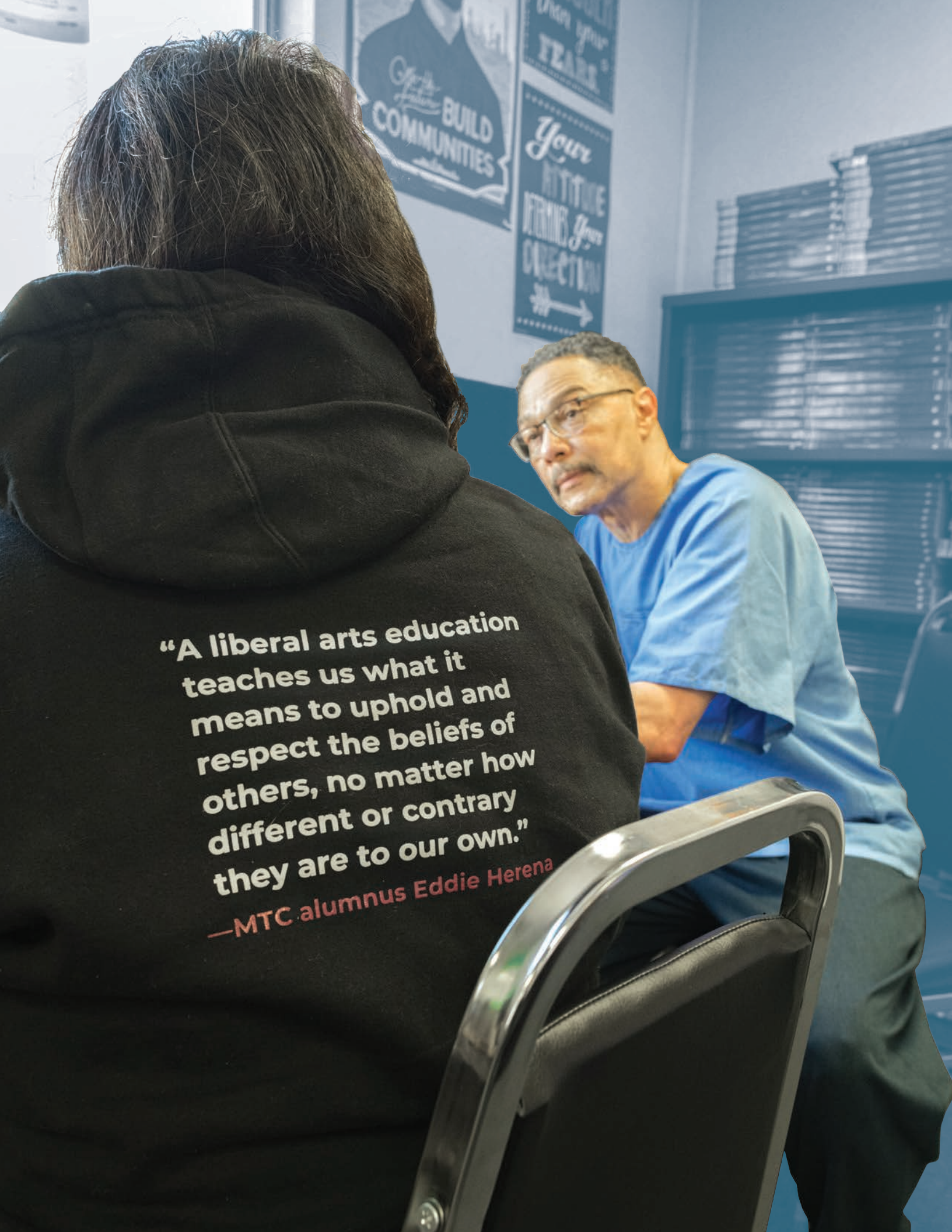
Now, You sees it as his responsibility to do the same for his students. "For kids here, there's trauma that they're facing in their daily lives. Kids are really quick to drop out of school to provide for their family. So how do I encourage these kids to at least try a little longer?"

*Don't give up* is a mantra You repeats for himself, too. "This guy, myself, he's going to find a way. Because giving up is not in his nature, as much as I might want to sometimes, because my reality is not where I want to be. Yet, I have to accept those terms in order for me to move forward and find fulfillment."

For now, fulfillment comes from riding his motorcycle and staying in touch from a distance, including with his fellow MTC alumni. "I'm still in touch with a lot of the guys. My connection to the program is still strong. I get invited to the alumni gatherings, and I'll be there in spirit. It feels like the community is moving in such a way that it can grow even more."

Looking ahead, You also sees fulfillment coming from his role as a teacher. "In the Mt. Tam tool box that I'm bringing with me, there are two important things I want to teach the kids. One is to think deep. To go beyond seeing things on the surface level. The other thing is how much we need each other. I will encourage them to constantly find support. Never go at it alone."





# Supporters

We extend our deepest thanks to every one of the individuals listed below for their commitment to the transformative power of education. Our work would not be possible without their dedication—whether through donating time, making a gift of any size, or giving monthly as a Cornerstone Donor.

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Education is empowering and inspiring, whether as a learner, an educator or one standing on the sidelines appreciating growth and transformation. My wife and I are in that last group. We learned about MTC when our son began to volunteer as a tutor and then an instructor. This opportunity has broadened and deepened his own academic journey. MTC is ‘boots on the ground,’ making life-changing differences one student at a time. We applaud those students and all the talented, dedicated volunteers and staff at MTC. Donating monthly is a way we can encourage you all to keep it up. You are seen and you matter greatly.

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I don't believe in prisons. I do believe in higher education. Every day I teach, we have count; that feels like prison. Every day I pass through three check-points; that feels like prison. But when I am in the classroom looking at students' faces, when I read their words, hear their voices, I am renewed in my belief that a gathering place where we can discuss ideas and question our intent is meaningful. Last class, a student said that the classroom is a haven where intellectual thought is honored and prison talk left outside. He called the space sacred. There's liberation in imagination. There's freedom in the classroom. As an MTC donor and faculty member, this is what I am supporting.





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We support Mount Tamalpais College's work because we have seen its power to transform the lives of incarcerated people through higher education and to create a sacred community for people living behind bars. As a tutor at San Quentin, Jeremy worked alongside MTC's students, faculty, and staff, teaching and being inspired by the students' ambition, joy of learning, and potential. We believe this work can change the lives of people and their families for generations to come.

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Everyone I dealt with at Mt. Tam College was very committed, and caring about the mission. You could pick up very clearly that the staff was very heavily invested in the community for the long run. Education is a basic necessity, but it becomes almost a privilege in a prison setting. MTC’s work provides a basic building block that is absolutely necessary for improving the lives of inmates—it builds confidence, improves core skills, and fosters a more positive self-image.



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+ CORNERSTONE DONORS  
support Mount Tamalpais College with monthly  
gifts, which are key to our financial sustainability  
and ability to plan for the future.





# Financial Overview

The 2022 fiscal year brought incredible growth in our infrastructure as a college, as we built out the divisions of student services and library and information services, and professionalized many areas of the college’s operations. In the year ahead we will continue to build out the organizational infrastructure required to support significant growth and the work of creating systemic change.

## REVENUE



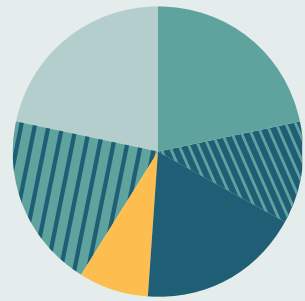
\$1,991,365	Individuals
\$1,492,666	Institutions
\$79,797	Corporate
\$43,036	Other *
<b>\$4,881,578</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>

\*Other revenue include program service fees, interest, merchandise sales, and miscellaneous income.

**\$1,274,714**

**DONATED VALUE OF INSTRUCTION** is included in *both* totals for Revenue & Expenses.

## EXPENSES



\$981,131	Academic Affairs
\$504,648	Alumni & Student Services
\$813,269	Other Program Expenses
\$356,497	Communications (Educating the Public)
\$867,293	Operations
\$967,980	Fundraising
<b>\$5,765,532</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>

**CREDITS** All images that appear in this report are owned by Mount Tamalpais College, thanks to photographer R.J. Lozada (excluding the portrait on page 16 provided by Phoeun You).

**PLEASE NOTE** that this Revenue and Expenses snapshot is pending a 2022 audit.



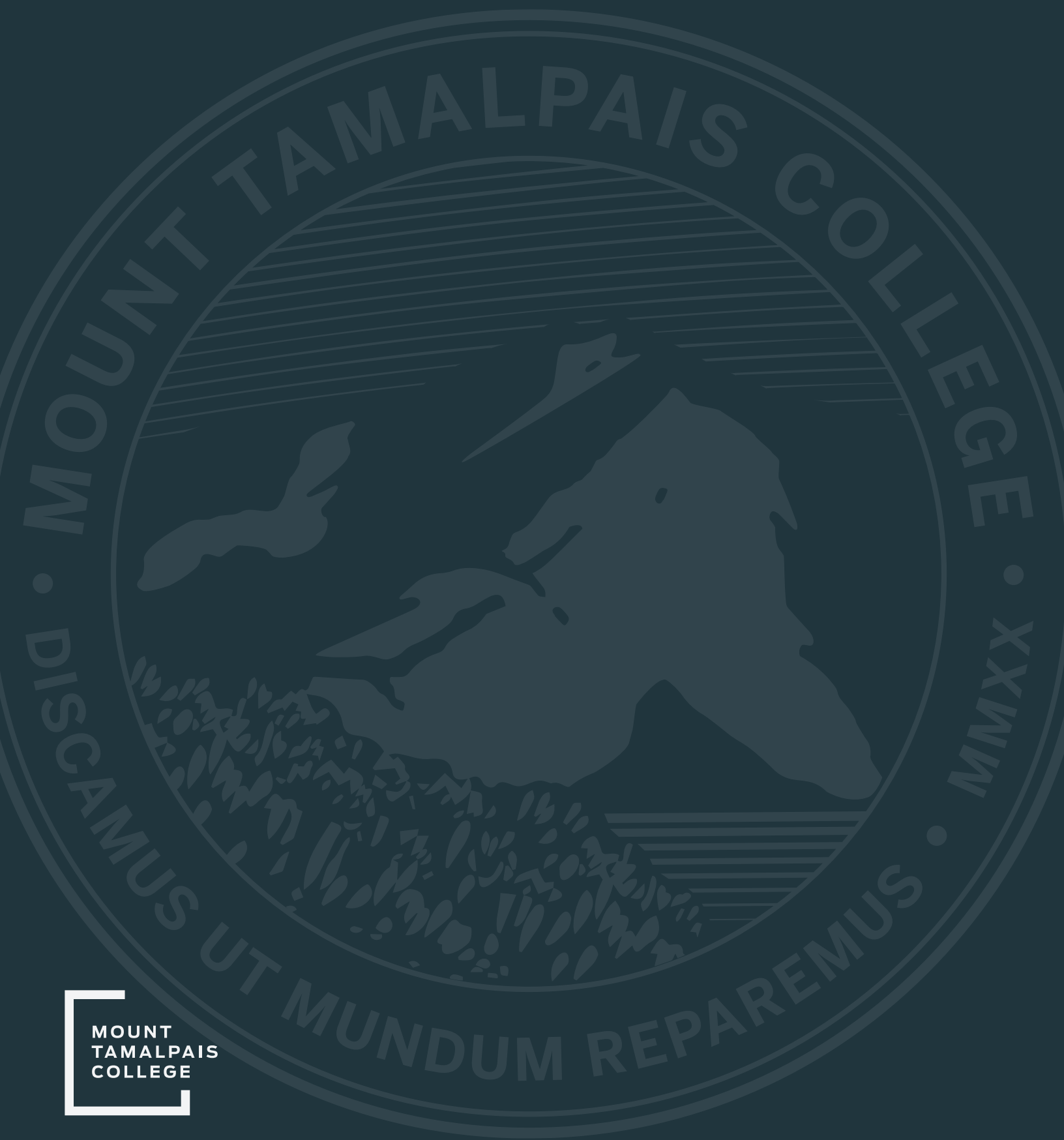
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<b>Amy Brunson</b> Director of Library Services and Education- al Technology	<b>Jen Juras</b> Chief of Institutional Effectiveness and Research	<b>Corey McNeil</b> Alumni Affairs Associate	<b>Richard Bonaru Richardson</b> Communications Associate
<b>Neela Benjamin</b> Chief Advancement Officer	<b>Jacob Kernodle</b> Registrar	<b>Makenzie Means</b> Development Director	<b>Frances Santiago</b> Learning Specialist
<b>Charles Crowe</b> Program Clerk	<b>Volker Kirchharz</b> Finance and HR Administrator	<b>Sasha Morozoff</b> Chief Operating Officer	<b>Amy Shea</b> Writing Program Director
<b>Nandita Dinesh</b> Dean of Academic Administration	<b>Bekki Lee-Wendt</b> Chief of Staff	<b>Dmitriy Orlov</b> Office Manager	<b>Carson Temple</b> Development Associate
<b>Windy Franklin Martinez</b> Director of Advising & Student Services	<b>Sarah Manley</b> Interim Humanities and Social Sciences Program Director; Academic Affairs Administrator	<b>Molly Parent</b> Communications and Public Information Director	<b>Marcus Williams</b> Office and Facilities Assistant
<b>Danny Ho</b> Program Assistant			

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