Dear BUILD EXITO Staff, Mentors, and Scholars,

The end of the year is a common time to reflect on accomplishments and recognize what opportunities await. At BUILD EXITO, we are so proud of what we have done in the past year and are excited to extend and expand our reach to positively impact others in the future. **What a perfect time to be recruiting our next cohort of Scholars!** This month’s Community Newsletter is a brief summary of program highlights that you can share with others to showcase our program and invite others to join our *EXITO Community*. Please forward this to any and all people you want to know about EXITO!

Happy Holidays to all!

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**Program Highlights**

For the past two years, BUILD EXITO’s innovative program model has supported curious,
passionate, and committed undergraduate students who want to make a difference in the world by bringing the following core program components to their undergraduate experience:

### Integrated Curriculum
EXITO offers essential academic training for research success with a Gateway to Research course and ongoing enrichment sessions. Portland Community College offers this course on all four of it’s Portland area campuses. PCC EXITO Scholars write a research proposal, identify one aspect to research, and present their findings through a poster presentation. Learn more about Gateway Courses here.

### Developmental Mentoring
The BUILD EXITO model offers a team mentoring approach to meet the multi-dimensional needs of Scholars. Bradley Cumez is a PSU Peer Mentor and a biology and chemistry major with hopes of getting a PhD in biology and researching or teaching. Bradley provides new Scholars with an on-campus connection and links to resources. Scholars are also supported by Career and Research Mentors. Learn more about EXITO mentoring here.

### Supportive Environment
BUILD EXITO is working to transform the university to better address the personal, social, academic, and financial needs of Scholars. No one understands this more than Northern Marianas College Chief Financial Officer, Tracy Guerrero, who helps Scholars navigate their research pathway with the understanding of the personal and professional needs required. Learn more about Tracy’s own experience and how she relates it to supporting BUILD EXITO Scholars.

### Research Experience
Through EXITO’s Research Learning Communities (RLCs), EXITO Scholars become contributing members of research projects. Over the last two years, Ashley Widmer, a biology major at the University of Alaska Anchorage, has studied cancer immunotherapy through use of liposomal nanoparticles. Ashley has developed her research experience under the guidance of Dr. Max Kullberg of the WWAMI Medical School. Explore all of EXITO’s RLCs here.

Interested in becoming an EXITO Scholar? Learn about applying!
BUILD EXITO’s success comes from the commitment and collaboration of Scholars, Faculty, Mentors, and Staff, all playing a unique role. The I am EXITO segment features the people who help make EXITO a reality.

Greg Townley, PhD  
Community Psychology  
Portland State University  
From Rocky Mount, NC

It is exciting to be part of such a large and important initiative that helps students from diverse backgrounds navigate their undergraduate educations on the way to becoming scientific researchers. I view human diversity as a critically important resource that helps communities thrive and grow. By engaging students from underrepresented groups in the health sciences, we help train future researchers, scientists, and healthcare providers whose work and community outreach will be informed by their own diverse life experiences. In my work as an EXITO career mentor, I aim to provide a safe and welcoming space in which scholars can talk about topics ranging from their coursework, to their graduate school plans, to the impact of their intersectional identities on their college experiences and well-being.

Kalera Stratton  
Graduate Teaching Assistant, MS Biology  
Portland State University  
From Portland, OR

In my first and second year at community college, I participated in a similar, smaller program called Bridges to Baccalaureate. The research experience and academic support I gained through that program had a powerful impact on my identity as a scholar and a researcher, and I believe that EXITO has tremendous potential to help hundreds of community college and Portland State students from underrepresented groups achieve their academic and career goals. I have a passion for mentoring students who, like myself, start out their college careers without the foundation of financial or academic support from their families or communities of origin.

I hope to contribute a sense of belonging to the students I mentor; a feeling that not only do they belong in research, but that they are valuable, needed, and part of a wider research community comprised of people who have faced and overcome similar barriers to entry into the world of academia. This is also a large part of what I hope to contribute to the field of scientific research, much as those who have mentored me have done; I hope to encourage much-needed diverse perspectives in the field, especially in neuroscience and developmental biology, fields which potentially stand to have great impact on social policy.