The Partners Program has grown a lot in the past 25 years. By the time I “inherited” it as the new director last fall, it had become a self-standing 501(c)3 organization with its own board, had doubled in size, and had decided to hire a director to build on the great work of Cynthia Geddes, Director of Community Service at College Prep, who had been the heart and soul of Partners for 14 years.

We began the year with a listening tour that eventually lasted 9 months! It included the voices of more than 130 Partners community members, including past and present students and families, high school mentors, teachers, administrators, and leaders at our peer programs. We learned a lot about what folks love about Partners, as well as areas that are poised for growth and improvement. This listening tour provided the basis for our new 5-year plan.

We began the year with a listening tour that eventually lasted 9 months! It included the voices of more than 130 Partners community members, including past and present students and families, high school mentors, teachers, administrators, and leaders at our peer programs. We learned a lot about what folks love about Partners, as well as areas that are poised for growth and improvement. This listening tour provided the basis for our new 5-year plan.

Already we have dug in to make this plan a reality. For example, we added a High School Transition Program to help students and families research, identify, apply to, and
2010 has been a year of great change and growth for Partners as we took advantage of our recently-doubled program size to provide richer learning experiences for our students and a better curricular and program framework for our teachers, assistant teachers, and college interns. The results have been extraordinary.

Here are just a few:

- John Fanning started as our new Director, joining us from Chicago Public Schools
- Stephanie Berger was promoted to Assistant Director for Leadership and Mentorship Programs
- Lexy Green was promoted to Assistant Director for Curriculum and Instruction
- We launched the College Internship Program to provide valuable experience to college students (and previous Partners participants) interested in education careers
- We realized our highest enrollment ever at 93 middle school students, 35 high-school aged assistant teachers and 6 college interns, for 134 total program participants in 2010
- We created and implemented a new 3-year curriculum called Pathways to

At the core of Partners is the program’s “brilliant gem,” the relationships formed between middle school students and their high school-aged mentors. Above, Partners alumna and current mentor Carrie helps 7th-graders Elmer and Ericka reveal their science experiment results. Below, Virginia (a College Prep student) heads to class with 8th-grader Nequwan.
Alumni Profile:
Ernesto Javier Martinez, Ph.D.
Class of 1994

When you grow up with good home training, as I did among immigrant families and the working poor in East Oakland, you know how to enter someone’s home with humility and gratefulness. You know how to recognize elders, traditions, and how to respect differences in how people set up house.

I came to College Prep, the Partner’s program home, with this disposition. The scent of the eucalyptus trees, the tangible quiet, the ravine of carefully laid out buildings, and the intellectual engagement still linger in my memories as the most gently crafted setting for growth and contemplation, a home one was genuinely happy to enter.

No amount of home training, however, could stop me from comparing this home—which was so different than any I had ever known—to my own. I recall, with some embarrassment now, how I often fell asleep in East Oakland dreaming about one day living in a place like College Prep—dreaming of a setting and a community that would not just welcome people like me and my family, but would be a place of our own, a place that my family and I could have a hand in crafting, and from which we could welcome others.

Imagine my pleasant surprise, then, when years after graduating from Partners, I can sit down and actually trace how those formative educational
Ernesto, continued

summers as a young boy (feeling inspired by reading Shakespeare, by painting and debating, by acting) led me later in life, when I was a student at Tech, Stanford, and Cornell, to not only expect more from institutions that portended to have my best interests in mind, but to also participate fully in helping craft more fruitful and tailored educational experiences, both for myself and others.

I am now a professor at the University of Oregon. I see my classrooms inspired by the lasting imprint of The Partners Program. I aspire to influence and teach a new generation of students—young people who are not simply grateful for opportunities to expand their education, but who “pay it forward,” who dedicate energy, love, and commitment towards creating lasting change for their communities.

Leadership Development in Action:
Nhat Bui - a Decade of Growth and Service
Class of 2003

I am proud to say that I have been involved with The Partners Program for nearly half my life. This past summer marked my tenth year, and so it is not surprising that this program means everything to me. It may be cliché to say, but Partners truly did change my life. I learned so much as a Partners student, an Assistant Teacher, and more recently as a member of the inaugural College Intern team. I have seen Partners grow in every aspect, and I am grateful to have been here every step of the way.

For me as a middle school student, Partners was more than just the academics. I was challenged and presented with obstacles that, with support from the teachers and ATs (Assistant Teachers), I had to learn to overcome. I have carried with me the motivation and courage that Partners instilled in me.

During high school as an AT, I aimed to share my experience with the Partners middle school students and teach them what I had learned, in hopes that they also would walk away feeling accomplished and aware of their potential. In addition, I developed my public speaking skills and became more comfortable meeting new people.

More recently as a CI (College Intern), I learned how to creatively coordinate programs in order to build a tighter Partners community and to lay a strong foundation for future students, ATs, and CIs. I gained leadership skills and communication skills that I can take with me wherever I go, too.

The Partners Program was the first place where I found my calling to work with people and students. Every summer I’ve had new experiences and have grown overall as a person, and now I am a senior at UC Santa Cruz majoring in Molecular, Cell and Developmental Biology. My post-college goals are to apply to nursing school and become a Registered Nurse. Of course, I also plan to continue to visit and to stay involved with Partners as much as I can!
In 2009, we completed a comprehensive data analysis in order to better understand our data outcomes over the first 20 (actually, 21) years of Partners students. We began with the first graduating class in 1988, and continued through the class of 2008.

Of Partners students eligible to complete high school by 2008, 98% had done so. Of these graduates, 80% attended public high schools, most commonly: Fremont, Oakland High, Oakland Tech, and Skyline – all Oakland Unified School District schools. Thus, our 98% graduation rate is relative to OUSD graduation rates of 50.5% in 2005 and 40% in 1995.

Of this same group (high school graduates by 2008), 100% reported matriculating to college. College attendance broke down as follows: UCs, 53%; CSUs, 23%; and private colleges, 24%. A full quarter of the private enrollments matriculated to Ivy League schools.

Of Partners students who could have completed college by 2008, 95% reported reaching this goal. The colleges of graduation reflect the colleges attended, with a slight dip for the CSU colleges and a gain for private colleges. Those alumni responding reported graduating from the following: UCs, 54%; CSUs, 19%; private colleges, 21%; and Ivy League schools, 9%.

These college statistics are based on a 40% response rate from our program alumni. Moving forward, much of our motivation to extend the Partners pipeline of support through college graduation is to make sure that we are better situated to monitor the progress of all of our students – and to get them the support they need to achieve college graduation. Our spring 2009 parent survey clarified what families need most from this expansion: year-round supports during middle school and help with college, scholarship, and financial aid applications. We’re working hard to give them what they’ve asked for!

One key to our success is that professional faculty teach every class. Here, Mrs. Williams leads a Pathways lesson, with middle school students working in small groups with their high school-aged mentors.
Director's letter, continued

enroll in high quality college preparatory high schools, whether public, parochial, or private. We strengthened our summer team to include reading and math specialists and a special education teacher to help those students most in need of extra supports. Of our six new hires this summer, four were also first-generation-to-college themselves, providing Partners students with role models who had been in their shoes just a few years before. All of these improvements were guied by Lexy Green, College Prep alumna and Director of Forensics, who “doubles” as the new Partners Assistant Director for Curriculum and Instruction.

Likewise, Stefani Berger, College Prep Director of Dance, stepped into a new role as Partners Assistant Director for Leadership and Mentorship Programs. Through her work we brought on our first team of college interns – all College Prep and Partners alumni – to help run the program. In addition, our high-school-aged Assistant Teachers benefited from more thorough training, additional supports, and additional responsibilities, too. We asked everyone to step up – and they did!

Of the changes, one of our veteran Assistant Teachers said, “To me the program has immeasurable worth. The changes (this year) were enormously effective and it really showed. Now, the value of the program has increased exponentially.” While we still have much to learn and a lot more to accomplish, comments like these help us feel like we are on the right track.

In the midst of these changes, the “brilliant gem” of the program remains the same: the long-lasting relationships formed between the middle school students and their high school mentors. Day after day, under the guidance of professional teachers, the mentors provide Partners students with highly individualized support – usually with no more than 4 students in a lesson group, and often in a mentor-to-student ratio of 1-to-1.

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Looking forward, we have two additional areas for growth before us: year-round support for our middle-school students, and a high school component to help Partners alumni navigate the increasingly complex and always changing world of college, scholarship, and financial aid applications. We’re hard at work to make a reality of these opportunities – and obligations.

Growth at this pace requires a community to not only support it, but also to dig in and help make it happen. I welcome you to visit our website at www.college-prep.org/partners, where you can find additional information about the program, including our five-year plan for growth and development.

Please also feel very welcome to email me at johnfa@college-prep.org and call me at 510/652-0111, x260, with your ideas and inspirations! I look forward to hearing from you!

Student Words, Student Works!

COURAGE & COLLABORATION were the guiding principles of Partners 2010, both in class (right, with high-5s for chances taken and lessons learned!) and in the community (moving clockwise, at the Alameda Food Bank). At Family Celebration Day & Graduation, students proudly displayed their courage posters, performed their choreo-poems and were showered with praise by their mentors, shared their Pathways dreams, explained their combined art & math projects (scaled models), and much, much more!
A Note from Our Chairman

Wow! What a year! We knew that doubling the size of Partners would open up opportunities we could not manage with a smaller program, but the excitement on campus this summer was absolutely contagious. We are indeed fortunate to have John Fanning’s experience guiding our growth into a far more sophisticated program capable of making significant positive changes in the lives of our students, while providing powerful learning experiences for our high school-aged assistant teachers, college interns, and faculty.

“Success by the Numbers” (page 5) tells just part of the story. Data is indeed important, but the real stories are captured in our students’ work (page 7), their joy of learning (look right!), and the reflections we read from alumni Ernesto Javier Martinez (page 3) and Nhat Bui (page 4).

Thank you to all of you whose generous support has made this success possible. With your ongoing support we will continue to open doors for our students and guide them to futures that they and their families could only dream of.

Steve Berger, Chairman