

The third annual Leadership Stories event was hosted by BSA on October 26th. Audience members were delighted to hear about two approaches to “Moving On Up” at Cal. Guest speaker, Cruz Grimaldo, Assistant Vice Chancellor & Director of Financial Aid and Scholarships shared about working her way up through a single campus unit, Financial Aid, while guest speaker James Dudek, Employee Experience Lead, shared about his path up, by way of several different departments and functional roles.

AVC Grimaldo who is only the 3rd female AVC & Director of FA & Scholarships and the 1st Chicana/Latina identified individual in this role, shared that her passion in the area of FA stemmed from having been a direct recipient of aid as a first-generation college student. While she initially began working at Cal shortly after graduation just to meet basic needs and provide for her family, it was her passion and alignment of goals to the mission of excellence and accessibility that offered her the opportunity to grow her role within the field of FA. She also credited the opportunity to take advantage of campus resources such as career coaching and management programs as critical to her success.

EE Lead Dudek shared how his leaps across functions and job classes led him to his current role. He commented that in his first years at Cal he did not have a career but rather a job. It was not until he was about 27 years old that he made a conscious decision to do a listening tour to interview people as to why they worked here and to discover a career, or rather multiple careers, over the next 20.

Both shared that critical to their growth and success was 1) mentorship, 2) involvement in staff organizations, and 3) networking. Mentors held them accountable, helped them develop good work habits, and ultimately continue to serve as resources with whom they both continue to meet. As for staff organization involvement, whether like James, founding a community of practice such as BPAWG to “speak a role into being” by becoming known as the expert on campus through finding ways to promote his own learning, or like Cruz, strengthening her leadership muscles by taking on a Co-Chair role in a Cultural Staff organization Alianza, both felt their experiences in staff organizations greatly expanded their networks and their leadership. Finally, networking has afforded both Cruz and James with ways to develop skills, learn about opportunities, and connect with others to be better at their jobs.

In the Q&A both addressed the importance of alignment to priorities/supervisors goals. With regard to job progression, they advised the audience to keep track of and be open to job opportunities, even signaling supervisors a year in advance that you are open to new opportunities. Finally, when asked how to maintain a positive attitude during campus challenges, Cruz shared for her that practicing gratitude and connecting with colleagues made a difference, while James shared that taking advantage of resources and being proud of the campus mission allowed him to stay positive. The audience was grateful to have shared in the wisdom of these two Cal Bears who from student, to employee, to senior managers have truly Moved on Up at Cal.