

Project Title: **Rising Scholar Network FY2022**

Project Lead: Dr. Nora Kenney

Performance Period: 7/01/22-7/31/25; Award Amount: \$565,598

Funding Source: California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, Educational Services and Support Division

Project Goal: Empower justice-impacted individuals to achieve academic success, gain meaningful employment, and successfully reintegrate into their communities.



## Goals and Achievements

- Developed and scaled a high-touch holistic support framework for justice-impacted students, including warm hand-offs to enrollment, financial aid, and counseling services; peer mentoring; and cohort-based academic programming.
- Expanded program reach, increasing the number of justice-impacted students served from 181 in 2022 to 698 in 2025 through consistent outreach, integrated support services, and growing campus and community visibility.
- Partnered with Palomar College Television (PCTV) to produce Almost Home: Life After Incarceration, a two-time Emmy award-winning documentary used in outreach and education.



## Student Impact

- 136 degrees/certificates earned by Rising Scholars since 2022; 33 students transferred to 4-year universities.
- Cohort models and integrated support contributed to an 88% course completion rate in 2024–25.
- Peer mentors and leadership roles increased students' confidence, belonging, and success.



## Partnerships & Collaborations

- Engaged with community-based reentry partners including the San Diego Sheriff's Department, Juvenile Court and Community Schools, and The Fellowship Center (TFC) to create education-to-reentry pathways and launch a TFC-funded scholarship and housing program for four students.
- Collaborated with Palomar's TRIO programs, Student Health Services, Dreamers Village, Veterans Center, and other aligned programs to support holistic student success.
- Hosted panels and events with community leaders to strengthen regional reentry and healing networks, promoting student access to housing, employment, and basic needs.



## Institutional and Community Impact

- Opened a dedicated Rising Scholars Student Center with over 600 monthly visits for academic and social support.
- Aligned services across counseling, AODS, and behavioral health - including a justice-impacted behavioral health liaison active in student events.
- Launched Rising Scholars-designated sections of English and Statistics to promote first-year completion of gateway courses and cohort-based success.
- Elevated the program's national profile through student- and staff-led presentations at A<sup>2</sup>MEND, APAHE, and CAAASA conferences.



## What's Next?

Palomar College will build on the success of Rising Scholars by using continued support from the Chancellor's Office to expand participation and success among justice-impacted students. Focus areas include increasing enrollment and success rates, strengthening student and academic support services, enhancing professional development for faculty and staff, and deepening integrated, equity-minded support across the college.