



Cal Poly Humboldt Oliner Altruism Institute

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Dear Oliner Altruism Institute Board Members and Community,

That's right: *Oliner Altruism Institute* is the new name for what was originally the Altruistic Personality and Prosocial Behavior Institute. Almost 45 years after Dr. Samuel P. Oliner and Dr. Pearl Oliner founded the institute, their name is decidedly attached to Cal Poly Humboldt's efforts [to seek out ways to enhance altruism and prosocial behavior in society](#).

The last year saw a record amount of support for students and community organizations that demonstrate the characteristics Sam and Pearl described in their acclaimed research on altruism—over \$1 million. Funding for these programs comes from competitive state and federal grants secured by the institute. While this is the largest part of the institute's current work, there are other projects that benefit from (and need) individual and organizational donors, such as the [Conversations on Altruism](#) series and the [Oliner Altruism Research Archive](#). As federal and state budget landscapes continue to shift, financial gifts will help sustain the momentum already achieved.

Something else new this year was the development of an undergraduate course called "Radical Compassion in Challenging Times." Created and taught by institute Board Member, Maral Attallah, this class reflects the Oliners' research and practice and adds to the university's course catalog that continues to include Sam and Pearl's scholarship, such as "Sociology of Altruism and Compassion" and "Narrating Genocide."

As 2025–26 draws to a close, I'd like to extend my appreciation to the Oliner Altruism Institute Student Assistant of the last couple years, Alondra Montoya Gomez. Alondra spent countless hours digitizing cassette tapes and assisting with community events. Thanks also go out to the anonymous donor whose gift supported her position. This year also sees the departure of long-time Program Assistant Brenna Killoran. Brenna expanded access to the [Oliner Altruism Research Archive](#) and deepened the institute's relationships with global communities in search of hope, inspiration, and commitment during times of distress.

In February, I had the opportunity to visit the cemetery where Sam and Pearl are honored and I offered an oral report on the institute's work. You can check out program highlights below to find out more of what the Oliner Altruism Institute has been up to this last year.

Please continue to share the [Oliner Altruism Institute website](#) with people so the ongoing work Sam and Pearl set out to do almost 45 years ago is widely circulated. [There are also buttons to press to make financial contributions](#).

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Conversations on Altruism

The annual Conversations on Altruism series continued in Fall 2025 with guest Dr. Joseph Giovannetti. During the Indigenous Peoples Week event, Dr. Giovannetti, Maral Attallah, and I talked about Joe's ways of enacting altruism and his long relationship with Dr. Sam Oliner. Dr. Giovannetti is a citizen of and seven-term councilman from the Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation. [A video of the public conversation can be found here, along with previous Conversations on Altruism](#).



Altruistic Behavior Workforce Development

Sam and Pearl Oliner described widely shared characteristics of people who provide support to other people with little to no significant material gain for themselves. These principles inform the knowledge, skills, values, and standpoint of the Oliner Altruism Institute's ongoing workforce development efforts in relation to mental health and substance use disorders. Behavioral health practice with vulnerable populations often requires a strong commitment to service for others at the expense of short-term material gains for oneself.

The Oliner Altruism Institute's workforce development efforts produce a workforce that demonstrates these characteristics:

- Different social classes and broad lived experience
- Internalized values such as helpfulness, responsibility, fairness, justice, compassion, and friendship
- Relationships with groups outside of their own family circles or immediate communities
- Acceptance of differences
- Responsibility for diverse peoples
- Meaning in their work
- Confidence to take calculated risks
- Awareness of what is happening around them
- A supportive emotional network
- Affirmation of their work by family members or others who can be trusted

Effective 2025–26, the Oliner Altruism Institute was awarded a 4-year, \$2 million grant from the federal Health Resources and Services Administration to increase the supply of a behavioral health workforce that is trained to provide integrated behavioral health care and committed to work in high-need and high-demand areas. I had referenced this grant application in last year's annual report with a note of pessimism about the likelihood of an award. I was wrong about that! By braiding these funds with other grants, the institute's Rural and Tribal Behavioral Health Fellowship (RTBH) programs have made it possible for students from high school through graduate school to secure jobs in the behavioral health workforce while expanding the capacity of health and human service organizations to provide care to underserved communities.



Rural and Tribal Behavioral Health Fellowships aim to address the shortage of behavioral health providers who have lived experience in high-need, underserved, and system-involved communities. One recent graduate, Karla Siordia, earned her baccalaureate degree in social work *and* her Masters of Social Work through Rural and Tribal Behavioral Health Fellowships. She completed a year long internship with the Loleta Community Resource Center where she strengthened the relationship between Providence St. Joseph's community outreach and the K-8 school that share a campus. Karla completed a graduate level internship with the Fortuna Union School District where she served students in the main high school as well as the continuation school.

In other altruistic behavior workforce development projects, the institute completed a project for the California Department of Health Care Access and Information to launch educational programs that prepare people for newly created [State Certified Wellness Coach](#) roles that serve children and youth in school-based and school-linked organizations. The Oliner Altruism Institute has also been represented and offered important input at many "stakeholder" meetings over the last year to ensure that statewide efforts to enhance behavioral health workforce development are responsive to rural and Tribal communities. The soon-to-be-unveiled [Behavioral Health Services Act 2026-30 Workforce Education and Training Plan](#) will determine whether there will be continued state funding for the institute's efforts in this area.

Loleta Student Equity

With higher-than-average numbers of Native American and Latinx students, the Loleta Union School District has historically struggled to provide a learning environment that all students and families report as welcoming. In accordance with the institute's purpose, I have been part of an ongoing Collaborative to strengthen the school's relationship with the broader Loleta community.



CRGS 480: Radical Compassion in Challenging Times



(Maral Attallah and Ronnie Swartz)

Maral Attallah, Oliner Altruism Institute Board Member and instructor in the CalPoly Humboldt Department of Critical Race, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, developed and delivered an undergraduate course to 18 students in the Spring semester. This class adds to CalPoly Humboldt's existing catalog of courses influenced by the [Oliners' research on altruism and prosocial behavior](#).

Oliner Altruism Research Archive



The free online library now includes additional recordings of Holocaust Rescuers and Survivors, transcripts of survey interviews on apology and forgiveness, with Carnegie Heroes and other moral exemplars, and experiential questionnaires completed by Holocaust Survivors. Cassette tapes of some of the interviews continue to be digitized for inclusion in the archive. [Check it all out here](#).

Consortium of Higher Education Centers for Holocaust, Genocide, and Human Rights Studies

The Oliner Altruism Institute continued to attend [Consortium](#) meetings related to positive/negative changes to our projects in relation to changing political, governmental, academic, and economic conditions. Some of my colleagues at other universities report that their work is under assault. I am grateful for the support I maintain from CalPoly Humboldt and the institute's Board of Directors.

Oliner Altruism Institute Board of Directors

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