

Silva Jajo is a dedicated Community College professional in Southern California, where they serve students of various backgrounds, including many first-generation and low-income students. Her passion for higher education began when she immigrated to the United States 18 years ago from Iraq. She went through many tough challenges in her life, but she is a dreamer, and her inspirations comes from Martin Luther King Jr, as he paved the way for underrepresented groups and inspired us to work toward equity, diversity and inclusion.

Silva made the decision to go to college in her early 20's. While being a student worker at Cuyamaca College Financial Aid Office and having two other part time jobs to support herself and her family back home, Silva started with ESL classes to improve her English language. After graduating with honors, she earned an Associate Degree in Art – Social Work from Cuyamaca College. Since then, she has been working two to three jobs in different industries, as she needed financial support to live independently. Therefore, she never had time to continue her education.

As a hard-working personnel, Silva continued to work multiple jobs, but her passion was always to work within the higher education industry. Luckily, she was hired as full-time staff at Grossmont College Counseling Department. Through her personal experience and the interactions she had with supportive and inspiring educational academic counselors, and getting the continued push from the Department Chair, she gained a sense of purpose for her life and recognized that the key to creating a better life for herself was through education. She is so inspired by her department's academic counselors and administrators, and she wishes one day she can be like them.

While working in higher education, Silva gained knowledge and expertise within the Student Services area. She loves and enjoys going above and beyond to meet the student's needs. She works in partnership with all student services areas to improve service access for students. She strives to offer resources to students throughout counseling programs. Working in the Counseling Department has allowed Silva to further grow in her career. She is very appreciative to her Department Dean who believed in her, as she recently accepted the opportunity to add duties as an Interim Counseling Services Supervisor within her department, which has rounded out her comprehension of the higher education experience.

Silva was nominated by her former supervisor for the Life Changer Scholarship. She always believed that there is a light at the end of the tunnel, so she could overcome barriers. As the recipient of National University's Life Changer Scholarship, she plans to obtain her bachelor's degree of Arts in Strategic Communications and pursue work as an Administrator or working for a specialized program geared toward equity and student success. With the current pandemic situation, the environment shifted to many virtual services and she now understands there is a huge technology gap. In her current role, she has been involved in maintaining a software system that helps the college keep up with technology within the student services areas. She implemented and streamlined that system for virtual services. This degree will allow Silva to reach beyond her current capacity to serve additional program areas and improve operational systems. She intends to apply the knowledge she will gain from this coursework to promote collaboration and communication between departments and promote more integrated process and procedures. As a result, this will have a positive impact on the campus and local community by increasing the ability to reach more students and utilize resources effectively.

Silva's goal is to be an educated professional and have a positive impact on her community and workplace. In addition, she wants to continue being an asset to her organization by expanding her skills and knowledge. She wants to build and establish more accessible resources for students. Her vision is to create a unified systems campus wide, so all student services departments utilize the same features. This will improve the experience of students as they navigate the college operations. She desires to work collaboratively with other departments to promote clear design and organization of her college and departmental websites, create accessible service links, and reduce duplication of content. This will allow the college to optimize their service delivery and will improve the quality of their relationships and operations. She is eager about developing her skills and expertise to have a high-level impact on her college and community.

Silva has learned that it is never too late, and where there is a will, there is a way. Because there's always something new in life to learn and to be inspired, she reminds herself of how she can appreciate, connect with, and encourage people. As others have inspired her, she works on being an inspiration to others!