Luis Lopez immigrated to the United States from Guadalajara, Mexico when he was 15 years old. He attended Franklin Senior High School, where he overcame the challenges of being an English-learner and excelled at academics. Luis went on to Occidental College where he studied mathematics. After receiving his Masters in Education from Occidental, he taught in Los Angeles schools. Two years ago, he was appointed Principal of his alma mater, Franklin High School. Franklin has traditionally experienced a high dropout rate. Noting that algebra is a class that is particularly challenging for many students, Lopez and his staff have collaborated with the Occidental Mathematics Department to teach math beyond the books. Under Lopez’s leadership, Franklin High School has seen a 50 percent increase in student retention rate from 9th to 10th grades.

Alan Knoerr grew up in Durham, North Carolina, and was educated in the public schools prior to and during desegregation. His undergraduate work was at Oberlin College, where he eventually found his way into mathematics—the last thing he could have imagined when he started college! After graduating, he taught middle and high school mathematics in Boston at a small program for at-risk students. Later he went on to study applied mathematics at Brown University. His doctoral work was in pattern theory, a field which combines mathematics and cognitive science. Alan joined the Mathematics Department at Occidental in 1991, where he has sought to develop a more hands-on, and collaborative approach to teaching mathematics and statistics, often using computers as laboratories. He also participates in the Cognitive Science Program, and over the past five years has become involved in the work of the Center for Community-Based Learning, including engaging Occidental’s Mathematics Department with students and mathematics teachers at Franklin High School. Alan is an avid folk dancer, and a member of Occidental’s Folk and Historical Dance Troupe. He lives in Pasadena with his wife Sharon and eight-year-old daughter Julia.

Phil Barney is an Urban & Environmental Policy and Critical Theory & Social Justice double major from Las Vegas, NV. While at Oxy, he has been politically active. He helped initiate OxyConscious, a group dedicated to working towards a more tolerant, aware, and socially progressive society, and worked on the struggle for hotel workers’ right to a union and a living wage. He has also been active with the Center for Community-Based Learning and the Intergroup Dialogue Program. Phil has been involved with Buddhist Meditation and other spiritual ventures. In the past few years, he says that he “has grown to see the beauty in others and has developed a passion for social change and social awareness.” After graduation, he plans to spend his life as an organizer.

Ian Breckenridge-Jackson is a senior Mathematics major and Spanish Literary and Cultural Studies minor from Pinole, California. He played for two years on the men’s basketball team at Oxy before becoming active in the theater program. In the summer of 2006, he took a weeklong trip to New Orleans to gut homes in the Ninth Ward with the Common Ground Collective, a grassroots activist organization founded in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. That trip was the first of four that he has taken to New Orleans, his most recent in March, where he tutored K-5th grade in the Upper Ninth Ward. In the fall, after his second trip to New Orleans, Ian had the opportunity to work as a TA in an ESL Algebra I classroom at Franklin High School through an Oxy class titled “Math, Education and Access to Power.” Ian recently completed his senior comprehensive project applying mathematical models to populations displaced by natural disasters.