

Thao Ha

MIRA COSTA COLLEGE

2024 HONOREE



Dr. Thao Ha's commitment to racial equity and social justice transcends traditional paradigms – providing an invitation and pathway for others to step into their potential, and a beacon of inspiration that sparks tangible change.

A professor of sociology at MiraCosta College, Ha's wide-ranging leadership roles serve to inspire a new generation of social justice advocates while driving collective action toward societal reforms. She was instrumental in establishing the college's Transitions Program for formerly incarcerated students as they reintegrate into an academic environment, and is now establishing a nonprofit to connect services and opportunities for people who were formerly incarcerated.

Her mentorship within the Rising Scholars network has empowered countless individuals to redefine their narratives as they embark on their educational journeys post-incarceration. In addition, Ha's co-founding of the Oceanside Justice Coalition has resulted in changes to local law enforcement policies, including revisions to the Oceanside Police Department's de-escalation policies that have fostered a safer and more equitable community for all. Through this work she is tearing down barriers hindering the pursuit of education, breaking cycles of recidivism, and empowering justice-involved individuals to define their own futures.

As a refugee from Vietnam whose parents had not attended college, Ha draws on her experiences to mentor first generation college students and inspire them to embrace and celebrate their roots. She champions academic success and the arts as catalysts for cultural pride through MiraCosta College's Mana program for Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (NHPI) students, a program she founded. Mana provides a platform for cultural celebration and recognition and validates the rich heritage of NHPI communities within academia. Ha also serves as president of the Vietnamese American Arts and Letters Association, exemplifying her dedication to preserving cultural heritage and fostering a sense of community. As a published author herself, she mentors other aspiring refugee and immigrant writers.

Ha's extensive social impact resume, tireless advocacy and unwavering dedication to uplifting the next generation of leaders attest to her visionary leadership. Her impact resonates in lives transformed, barriers dismantled, and seeds of understanding sown within the community.

