We are thrilled to welcome the largest cohort of scholars to date and see their excitement and dedication to the future of affordable housing.  Under Commitment to California, we are expanding the program by dramatically increasing the number of scholars (historically there were three-to-four awards each year), meeting our three-year goal of 16 scholars in year one. We are also creating more opportunities for scholars to transition from school into careers in affordable housing by providing each scholar with an industry mentor and engagement opportunities at paid conferences, career assistance, and engaging with industry leaders. Through this growth we can assist more students in their entry into affordable housing work.

 Launching our Commitment to California earlier this year, we set out to impact over 800 industry professionals over the next three years via our $2.5 million pledge to fund different industry programs across the state. Merritt Scholars is a key part of Commitment to California, along with the Housing Development Training Institute and industry internships and career development at other peer organizations.

This year’s Merritt Scholars come from 11 schools, with over half from California State Universities (CSUs), which is important to Commitment to California’s equity goals as half of students attending a CSU are in an underrepresented minority and nearly half are lower income. 70% of this year’s scholars identify as BIPOC or have lived experience in affordable housing, low-income, and/or homelessness.

Merritt knows that solving the affordable housing crises means supporting and training the next generation of leaders, who will change the future of California. Leveraging partnerships and focusing on equity and inclusion in the industry will create new opportunities and create a brighter, better future for affordable housing and all of California.

**Here are a few words from our scholars:**   
“I am honored to be selected as a Merritt Scholars award recipient. I am grateful for the opportunity to work with Merritt’s mentors and network so that I may join those who are working to resolve our country’s most urgent housing issues.” Rebecca Swint, 2022 Merritt Scholar

“Housing is a human right, not a privilege. I am currently working in affordable housing in San Diego and plan to continue working in this field.” Alexis Johnson, 2022 Merritt Scholar   
   
“Being a Merritt Scholar recipient is an opportunity to stand at the planning table for those who are unable; whether through inaccessibility or exclusion. Although everyone should have the right to safe housing and well-being, many historically disadvantaged families have to choose between these and ultimately endure suffering or poverty — ‘just to make it by.’” Jonathan Dena, 2022 Merritt Scholar  

**Join us in welcoming our 16 scholars:**

**Jacob Boesch**, San Francisco State University, Undergraduate, Urban Studies   
**Nathaly Borges**, CSU, East Bay, Undergraduate, Business Administration   
**Katherine Caggiano**, University of San Diego, Undergraduate, Business and Real Estate   
**Madeline Connelly**, Stanford University, Undergraduate, Civil Engineering   
**Monica Davalos**, CSU, Sacramento, Masters, Public Administration    
**Ali Day**, CSU Northridge, Masters, Urban Planning   
**Jonathan Dena**, UC Berkeley, Undergraduate, Urban Studies   
**Alexis Johnson**, Midwestern State University, Masters, Clinical Mental Health   
**Olivia LaVecchia**, UC Berkeley, Masters, City Planning   
**Venus Meza**, CSU, Long Beach, Masters, Geography   
**Natkarn Sandoval**, San Jose State University, Graduate, Urban Planning   
**Rebecca Swint**, CSU, Northridge, Undergraduate, Urban Planning   
**Nathaly Teran**, CSU, Sacramento, Graduate, Public Administration and Policy   
**Zennon Ulyate-Crow**, UC Santa Cruz, Undergraduate, Politics   
**Obinna Uwakah**, UC Berkeley, Graduate, Development and Design   
**Daniel Valverde Jr**, University of San Francisco, Graduate, Public Administration

Read more about the Merritt Scholars program here: [Merritt Scholars – Merritt Community Capital Corporation (merrittcap.org)](https://merrittcap.org/merritt-scholars/)

Learn more about Commitment to California here:[Commitment to California – Merritt Community Capital Corporation (merrittcap.org)](https://merrittcap.org/commitment-to-california/)

**About Merritt:**

Merritt Community Capital Corporation is a nonprofit dedicated to our mission to provide equity capital for affordable housing exclusively to California. We do this by partnering with mission-aligned affordable housing developers throughout the state to ensure the most critical communities are developed and maintained for low-income residents. Since 1989, Merritt has created and/or preserved more than 9,000 affordable homes, through investing $1 billion in 23 separate funds, providing housing for nearly 25,000 people.