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Metro's Sharad Mulchand, Alva Carrasco and Raymond Wang (from left) all graduated this year from San Jose State University's Mineta Transportation Institute. The Institute allows for study in satellite classes held at Gateway and confers a Masters of Science in Transportation Management. *Photo courtesy of Alva Carrasco.*

Mineta Transportation Institute Classes Lead to Masters Degrees

- Alva Carrasco, Sharad Mulchand and Raymond Wang took night classes at Metro Headquarters through Mineta Transportation Institute

By JIMMY STROUP

(July 15, 2008) Three of Metro's brightest recently enriched their knowledge by earning Masters of Science degrees in Transportation Management through the Mineta Transportation Institute (MTI) at San Jose State University.

Division 10 Transportation Manager Alva Carrasco, Transportation Planning Manager Sharad Mulchand and Cost Estimator Raymond Wang were each awarded their MS on June 28 in a ceremony attended by former congressman and MTI founder Norman Mineta.

"[Mineta] saw a need for education and research in transportation and created the outreach program through San Jose State," Wang explained. "It's a unique field and this program really caters to the specialized knowledge in transportation."

Carrasco, Mulchand and Wang completed the full-term, 30-credit Masters

program. (There is also a four-class certificate program.) Courses were taught in the evenings, mainly at Gateway. Marion Colston, director of Strategic Organizational Planning, helped provide the space and equipment needed to teach the courses.

"It makes it a lot easier for Metro employees to take the courses, having them right here in the building," Mulchand said. "I encourage any Metro employee to give it a try. Most of us get reimbursed for the classes and the books, so all it takes is a little effort and dedication."

Eligible for tuition reimbursement

Because they are taught through an accredited institution, both the MTI Masters and certificate programs are eligible for whatever tuition reimbursement each Metro employee's contract allows.

Wang said the knowledge learned in class isn't the only benefit to taking classes with other Metro employees. He met people from all segments of transportation—such as Carrasco and Mulchand—that his job on the Gateway Tower's 12th floor might never allow him to meet professionally.

The classes are taught by a mix of working professionals in the field and university-tenured professors. Metro's Chief Communications Officer Matt Raymond has been spotted teaching marketing courses for the program.

"It's nice to have people in the field teaching us about the field," Wang said. "Usually in a class you learn about stuff that's happened in the past or isn't timely, but in these classes we're getting the up-to-date material our instructors are working with every day."

All three of the recent graduates found the program unusually germane to their Metro work. Each mentioned that some of her or his undergraduate work was irrelevant to their professional ambitions, but that this program was geared toward pertinent transportation information.

"It's untraditional in that it's focused on transportation," Carrasco said. "You really do learn things that you can literally take to work and use to your advantage the very next day. In that respect, it's very fulfilling."

For information on the program, you can visit MTI at <http://transweb.sjsu.edu/mtiportal/index.html>.