



NEWS

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Paving the Way to College Success: ECC Compton's First Year Experience Program

The transition to higher education, whether from high school or work, involves a period of adaptation and skill building that can pose challenges for new students. These challenges are often compounded for first-generation college students and those who may feel unprepared for the college environment. El Camino College Compton Center is at the forefront of promoting college readiness and introducing students to the academic, social, administrative and financial realities of academic life through their First Year Experience Program (FYE).

FYE directly addresses the needs of incoming students through a comprehensive support program that is yielding outstanding results.

"FYE prepares students for academic success. It helps in selecting a career path and learning more about how to manage resources on campus and outside to become successful in college and life," explains Dr. Roza Ekimyan, Professor of Human Development.

The program provides a wide array of resources targeting specific aspects of the journey to college. It starts with a warm and welcoming orientation to campus, along with assistance accessing practical benefits such as early registration. Ensuring newcomers have a guaranteed set of classes early on alleviates stress and allows students to focus on taking advantage of additional FYE offerings such as study skills workshops, one-on-one counseling, peer support and bilingual services.

"FYE basically taught us how to be college students and how to handle higher ed," explains Francisco Ortega, a Lynwood High School graduate and music major with a concentration in jazz.

"The priority- and early-registration programs were especially important to me because I felt one step ahead of getting my classes. They're helping me achieve my goals of knocking down the classes I have to take," says Ortega, who enrolled at ECC Compton Center in 2016 and is preparing for a career in the music industry. Getting into the exact courses he needs has not been a problem.

"FYE was also helpful because it introduced me to the campus. It's a very comfortable and friendly environment." Ortega, who plays six different instruments and is a saxophone player in the ECC Compton Center jazz ensemble, cites Dr. Ekimyan and professors such as Harvey Estrada, Director of Commercial Music Technology, as strong influences in his journey.

"One of the most important things I learned from Dr. Ekimyan's human development courses was time management. It helps you stay on track and helps you get the most out of your day."

These human development courses serve as a foundational aspect of the FYE program. As Dr. Ekimyan explains, "Classes such as 'Strategies for Creating Success in College and in Life' provide an exploration of cognitive, psychological, social and physical factors influencing success. I teach topics like personal responsibility, critical thinking, motivation, self-efficacy, self-awareness, lifelong learning, self-management, health and wellness, interpersonal communication, and educational planning."

The faculty, FYE counselors and FYE Coordinator/Counselor Janette Morales work in tandem to eliminate barriers to college, guiding students through multiple steps of college acclimation and career planning. From tours of four-year universities to financial aid counseling to activities and social events, the program serves as a powerful tool for participants.

Recent data from the Office of Institutional Research demonstrates just how effective FYE is for enrollees. FYE students are reaching the 30-unit threshold faster than students who do not participate, achieving 30 units nearly one term faster than their non-FYE peers.

FYE students are also twice as likely to complete their associate degrees within three years. Participants demonstrate higher rates of continued enrollment in their second year at ECC, and they are more likely to transfer to four-year universities.

Francisco Ortega has his sights set on CSU Long Beach, and he thanks ECC Compton Center and FYE for showing him the way. "It's an amazing school. It's helping me with my goals and academics...when you go to ECC Compton Center, you're going to want to get involved with the programs and what the campus has to offer in order for you to succeed." And as for FYE? "I'd describe FYE as a helping hand."

For additional information regarding the First Year Experience at El Camino College Compton Center, please contact Janette Morales, FYE Coordinator/Counselor at jmorales@elcamino.edu or 310-900-1600, ext. 2761.

About El Camino College Compton Center

El Camino College Compton Center is the community's education solution offering a full complement of transfer and degree courses, as well as career and technical education. Students may earn an associate degree or certificate, transfer to a four-year university or train for a career. El Camino College Compton Center is located at 1111 E. Artesia Boulevard, Compton, CA 90221.

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