



# NEWS

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El Camino College Compton Center | Public Relations & Marketing Department  
16007 Crenshaw Blvd., Torrance, CA 90506  
Contact: Ann M. Garten, Director, Community Relations  
Telephone: (310) 660-3406 | Email: [agarten@elcamino.edu](mailto:agarten@elcamino.edu)

**For Immediate Release**

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## **El Camino College Compton Center Alumnus Pursues Passion for Healthcare and Politics in the Capital**

Jose Tapia, El Camino College Compton Center alumnus of 2012, is on the move, pursuing his passion for politics and health care in Sacramento and Washington, D.C.

Tapia graduated from UCLA in June 2015 with a bachelor's degree in political science, and credits ECC Compton Center for getting him started on the right path to a stimulating career. He praises his Compton Center professors for their mentoring: "I don't think I'd ever have been able to transfer to UCLA without their support and help."

Growing up in Lynwood, Tapia says his passion for politics and healthcare advocacy started early when his family and friends had difficulty finding doctors to treat them. The limited resources available through public assistance hindered his cousin, who was plagued with chronic symptoms of multiple sclerosis. "He would resort to waiting for hours for treatment at the nearest emergency hospital," said Tapia. Some of his friends, victims of gang violence and gunshots, would tolerate serious wounds rather than track down a clinic that would accept them without insurance.

Now a legislative assistant for Health Access in Sacramento, Tapia is part of a team advocating and sponsoring quality healthcare for Californians. Every work day, he walks past the state capitol, and is grateful not only for a rewarding career, but also for his employer who offers a full health benefits package.

Tapia says the harsh environment during his middle- and high school years negatively affected his early education. Starting in middle school, his friends and neighbors were joining gangs, "getting shot," and even going to jail. His teachers were overwhelmed and not equipped to provide extra guidance. While Tapia resisted joining the gangs, his childhood friends always looked out for him and didn't pressure him. "They knew I wanted to do big things with my life," said Tapia.

Upon graduation from Lynwood High School in 2008, Tapia wanted to move forward with his studies to follow his passions, but admits his skills did not meet the minimum college requirements. Enrolling at ECC Compton Center in 2009, he took advantage of its Writing Center to improve his writing abilities. He also took basic skills classes to

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## Compton Center Alum Pursues Healthcare Advocacy 2-2-2-2

improve his math aptitude. Attending Compton Center, he not only appreciated being closer to home, he found better availability in the courses to earn his associate degree.

“My professors (at Compton Center) were patient and understanding that the students here did not have traditional family backgrounds,” said Tapia. “They were very accommodating and did not judge us.”

After earning his associate degree from ECC Compton Center in 2012, Tapia and his professors were thrilled to learn he was accepted as a transfer student to top-ranked UCLA. Through the UCLA Center for American Politics and Public Policy (CAPP), he completed an internship with Doctors for America in the Quarter in Washington Program. His research paper on single payer healthcare further inspired his desire to work in health advocacy. He recently returned to the nation’s capital to attend a conference in his new position at Health Access.

Living in Sacramento since last fall, Tapia enjoys “the stimulation of living in a city where decisions are made and where we can make things happen in government.” He loves the fast pace and complexity of public policy, and currently plans to apply to graduate school to further his expertise.

Reaching out to ECC Compton Center students, Tapia offered the following advice, “Have big expectations for yourself. Dream big. Even if you start at entry level, excel in what you do and then you’ll always grow.”

### **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.

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**Photo Caption:** El Camino College Compton Center Alumnus Jose Tapia at the House of Representatives in Washington, D.C. (lobbying with UCLA for financial aid programs).