



NEWS

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

For Immediate Release

May 4, 2016

El Camino College Compton Center 2016 Presidential Scholars Recognized for Achieving Academic Success

El Camino College Compton Center students Nico Balam, Ariadna Aguilera and Karla Padron have been named as 2016 Presidential Scholars. The three honors students received their awards at the annual Academic Awards Tea. Presidential Scholars represent students who have shown academic strength, singular focus and the desire to reach their highest potential, while overcoming obstacles in the pursuit of their dreams. The Presidential Scholar program recognizes outstanding graduating students who have a 3.7 grade point average or higher. Here are their personal stories of success.

Nico Balam

Lynwood resident Nico Balam is on track to graduate from ECC Compton Center with an associate degree in machine tool technology in May. Enrolling in college courses for the first time at 38 years old, he has earned a cumulative GPA of 3.9 while working full-time and supporting his wife and four children.

As an at-risk youth who became afflicted with alcoholism at the age of 18, Balam says he had lost his sense of purpose and hope. Finally, he realized, “There is one thing that cannot be taken from me, and that’s an education. ECC Compton Center has provided me with an education and has helped me grow as person.”

Balam makes a point of reaching out to others who are struggling to find their path in life. “I try to encourage young people to seek an education if they are not happy with their current situation,” he says. I tell them it is never too late to change and seek a better future, and that the mind is limitless and would be a terrible thing to waste. If I can do it, then anyone can.”

The honors student is proud that he can now inspire his children to be their best. “Many nights they have woken up from their sleep to see me studying or finishing an assignment,” said Balam. “Many times they have seen me sacrifice events that are dear to me because college is a priority. Today, I see my kids doing the same things, and I witness the fruits these habits are bearing in their lives.”



- more -

Ariadna Aguilera

Ariadna Aguilera is a 2005 graduate of Compton High School who waited five years before deciding it was time to continue her education. She is now graduating from ECC Compton Center with an associate degree and a cumulative GPA of 3.9. She plans to transfer to a University of California campus and major in anthropology. Aguilera has embraced her time at Compton Center by taking advantage of student resources such as the First Year Experience (FYE) program, the Northern California University Tour, and joining the badminton team.

Aguilera admits she felt “unsure of what path to follow” after high school. Starting as a part-time student at Compton Center, she met with her counselor and learned of the support and guidance offered to first-time-college students through the FYE program. “This was the first step which propelled me to work hard and aspire to succeed, she said. “I received guidance regarding the courses to take to ensure a good foundation for my continued academic progress.”

Participating in the Northern California University Tour last fall, Aguilera says that the opportunity to visit some of California’s top universities helped her solidify her educational aspirations. “I found myself confident of the path I wanted to take, and I was no longer intimidated, but determined to accomplish my goals,” she said.

Beyond the support she has found at Compton Center, Aguilera is inspired by how hard her mother worked to give her children the best opportunity at life despite having limited education and professional skills. “Though there have been some setbacks in my educational goals and it has taken me some time to find my true passion, these challenges and the example of my mother’s resilience has helped me maintain a positive outlook despite the hardships,” said Aguilera. I am determined to accomplish my career goals, and through this process grow as an individual.”

Karla Padron,

Karla Padron is a 2013 graduate of Jordon High School who is receiving an associate degree this spring and has earned a cumulative GPA of 3.8. With the goal of becoming a preschool teacher, she is transferring to California State University, Long Beach where she will major in child development.

Padron says her biggest obstacle before achieving success at ECC Compton Center was her poor study habits, procrastination, and a lack of direction. She decided to attend Compton Center because of its convenient location. “I did not apply to any other colleges or universities because I felt unprepared,” said Padron. “I was unsure of what my academic goals were, but I did not want to disappoint my parents or myself by not attending college.”

The honors student is grateful for the support ECC Compton Center provided. “Enrolling in the First Year Experience program made me feel like I was a part of something,” she said. “I met plenty of new people, and it made me realize that I wanted to continue my education and expand my knowledge. FYE set me on the right path and helped me straighten out my priorities.”



She is thankful to Compton Center for helping set her up for academic success. “Compton Center has made college a great experience for me by helping me to fully use my resources, learn about all the options I have, and to simply cherish education,” she said. “My communication and decision-making skills have improved tremendously. I find myself making better life choices and having a better understanding of what it means to prioritize.”

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.

###

Hi-res photos available upon request