



# NEWS

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## **Compton College Alumna Pursing Doctor of Pharmacy Degree at USC**

Career changer Mayra Fuentes Pineda knew she wanted to work in the field of healthcare helping others, especially those from underserved communities and Compton College provided the educational foundation she needed to pursue a new career direction.

A resident of Lynwood, Pineda earned a bachelor's degree in sociology at California State University, Dominguez Hills in 2015 and worked for more than four years at a mental health treatment facility for youth and teens. While she was proud of her work helping young people, she didn't feel it was the best fit for her and realized she wanted to move from sociology to another healthcare field. "I knew I wanted to go back to school to continue my education, but I just didn't know what major to pursue," said Pineda.

Then her mother's struggles as a caregiver for a family member provided Pineda with some inspiration. "My mother cares for her mother and is a non-native English speaker," said Pineda. "I watched her struggle with a language barrier at the local pharmacy trying to understand the multiple medications prescribed to my grandmother that she would have to accurately administer. It has been our experience that there are not a lot of pharmacists that speak Spanish."

Pineda got to work researching what it would take to become a pharmacist. She learned that the University of Southern California (USC) offered free workshops that covered the requirements for entering the Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD) program. "I had a lot of prerequisite classes to complete before applying to pharmacy school, so I spoke with a counselor at Compton College, which is conveniently located near my home, and learned that I could take most of my prerequisite classes there," said Pineda.

She enrolled at Compton College in summer 2019 and completed nearly all her prerequisites for pharmacy school by spring 2022. "I received financial aid after my first semester at Compton College which paid for all my classes, the instructors are super helpful and attentive, and I used the STEM Center a lot for guidance and tutoring in chemistry, biology, and math," she said. "I'm extremely grateful to my biology instructor Mr. Sidhu, who wrote me a letter of recommendation for admission to the PharmD program. I had such a good experience at Compton College, and I recommend the college to everyone who might be interested."

In September 2021, Pineda applied to three Doctor of Pharmacy programs in California and was accepted to all three schools. She ultimately chose to enroll in USC's PharmD program because it is

one of the top-rated pharmacy programs in the country and offers hands-on clinical experience beginning in the first year. She began the four-year program in August 2022.

“I chose to study to become a pharmacist so I can use my bilingual skills in underserved communities either at a pharmacy or a hospital,” said Pineda. “My focus right now is community pharmacy. This PharmD program exposes students to a lot of different areas of practice within the pharmacy field, so I have options.” She says a few highlights so far were receiving her lab coat at “an emotional and motivational white coat ceremony” during orientation week and participating in a vaccination clinic.

“I would have never thought I would end up at pharmacy school at USC!” Pineda said. “I’m so grateful to Compton College for offering an affordable foundation leading to admission to a prestigious PharmD program. It has been a long journey, but I feel it is worth it.”

**Photo Available Online:**

[https://www.compton.edu/adminandoperations/communityrelations/images/2022/Pineda\\_Mayra-Fuentes.jpg](https://www.compton.edu/adminandoperations/communityrelations/images/2022/Pineda_Mayra-Fuentes.jpg)

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**About Compton College**

Compton College 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. Compton College is located at 1111 E. Artesia Boulevard, Compton, CA 90221.