



SOUTHWESTERN COLLEGE

*Student of
Distinction Award
2016*



Denisse Bautista Ibarra

Major: Administration of Justice

Main Educational Goal: To transfer and get a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology with a concentration in Criminal Justice, then earn a Master's Degree in Psychology.

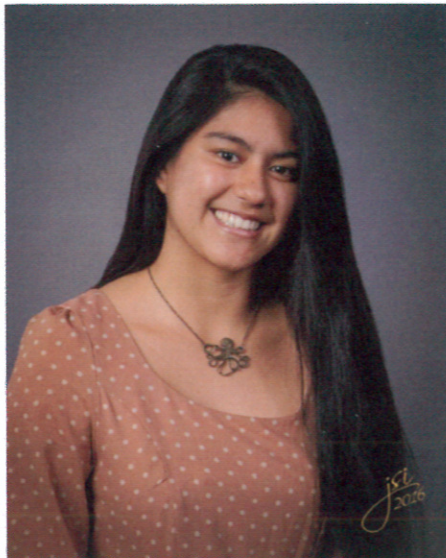
Life Goals: To become an FBI agent, travel the world and serve communities in third world countries as an educator to young kids.

Significant Achievements: Nu Alpha Omega President; Church youth leader; on President's Honors list; Explorer Corporal for NCPD; CSF lifetime member.

How would you like others to remember you:

No matter what obstacles are thrown in my direction and knock me down, I will continue to get up and never give up no matter what the circumstances are to strive in this life.

Nominated by: Gary Guthrie



Melissa Belen-Gonzalez

Major: Biology

Main Educational Goal: To transfer and earn a Bachelor's Degree, followed by a Master's Degree and Doctoral Degree in Marine Biology.

Life Goals: To research the ecological factors by which sharks and invertebrates have evolved; continue dancing in memory of Bernadette Ondevilla.

Significant Achievements: Volunteer aquarist at Living Coast Discovery Center; participated in SDSU Bridges Baccalaureate Program; attended integrative Marine Biology research at the University of Massachusetts.

How would you like others to remember you: As the short, loud brown girl who devoted her life to the ocean and lived every day for Bernadette Ondevilla, and for those who were never given the chance to pursue science.

Nominated by: Dr. Raga Bakhiet



Deborah Bon

Major: Accounting

Main Educational Goal: Transfer to SDSU to graduate with a B.S. in Accounting.

Life Goals: To continue inspiring others to pursue their dreams, especially single moms; to be an accountant and have my own tax and immigration office in order to help Hispanic communities and pay it forward.

Significant Achievements: Recipient of Soroptimist Award: Live Your Dream Award; Member of Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society; Church volunteer.

How would you like others to remember you: As a person that defied the odds and was brave enough to pave a road toward education for her future generations.

Nominated by: Martina Peinado



James Centeno

Major: Asian Studies

Main Educational Goal: To earn an A.A. at SWC and then transfer to UCSD or SDSU, followed by pursuing a Master's Degree in International Relations/Pacific Studies.

Life Goals: To continue serving the country as a Foreign Service Officer; operate my own food truck for my fellow disabled veterans; publish a book on Ethnic Studies.

Significant Achievements: Two-time President's List Awardee; Leader of SWC Bayan Learning Community; Volunteer for SWC Autism Nuerolinks Program; Member of Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society; Army Wounded Warrior Rehab Program Mentor.

How would you like others to remember you: As a true patriot who embraced the value of selfless service to God, country, and family.

Nominated by: Barbara Pescar, Henry Aronson



Aileen Contreras

Major: Architecture, Interior Design

Main Educational Goal: To transfer to SDSU and obtain a Bachelor's Degree in Interior Design and pursue a Master's Degree in Architecture.

Life Goals: To have my own Architecture/Interior Design firm and assist with community improvements.

Significant Achievements: Currently serving as ASO's Vice President of Club Affairs; completed the honors program; former President of the Sustainable Research Alliance; former ASO Senator at Large; volunteer at Sunnyside Elementary School.

How would you like others to remember you: As a person who is strong-willed, creative, and available to help others.

Nominated by: Diana De La Torre, Renee St. Louis, Tom Rogo



Cecelia Di Mino

Major: Linguistics or Liberal Arts, Elementary Education

Main Educational Goal: To transfer to a university in the fall.

Life Goals: To teach English as a Second Language with a primary focus on refugee children overseas.

Significant Achievements: Peer Mentor for SWC Autism Neurolinks program; SWC superior student of acting; SWC President's List.

How would you like others to remember you: As a person who wanted to leave behind an impression of kindness and compassion in this world.

Nominated by: Nghiep Quan



Chrystian Gonzalez

Major: Business Administration and Psychology

Main Educational Goal: To transfer to a local university.

Life Goals: To start a non-profit organization to help un-adopted animals so they do not get euthanized; I would like to have an auto mechanic shop with my husband.

Significant Achievements: Graduated with highest honors with an Associate Degree in Culinary Arts from the Art Institute; Vice President of the Business Club; Member of Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society; tax volunteer.

2016 Recipient of: Indevia Accounting, Inc. Scholarship; Jason's Courtyard Cafe Entrepreneurial Scholarship for Business Majors.

How would you like others to remember you: Someone who has endless love to give, and a loyal, kind-hearted, strong person.

Nominated by: Elisabeth Shapiro



Andrew Lerch

Major: Business Administration

Main Educational Goal: To transfer and earn a Bachelor's Degree in Management from a UC or CSU.

Life Goals: Create or own a brew pub after retiring from civil service.

Significant Achievements: SWC's President's List; volunteer for Special Olympics; volunteer coach for tee-ball team.

How would you like others to remember you: As a hardworking person who is not only willing to lead but also willing to learn from others; an excellent team member willing to help and teach; a dedicated family man.

Nominated by: Jackie Osborne



Lucio Lira

Major: Psychology

Main Educational Goal: To transfer to UCLA to earn a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology and earn a Master's Degree in Counseling.

Life Goals: My experiences at SWC have inspired me to pursue a career in counseling; to serve students and the community and become a college counselor.

Significant Achievements: Puente Project Alumni; Member of Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society; ASO Scholastic Scholarship Awardee.

How would you like others to remember you: As a persistent, optimistic, and determined individual that is committed to accomplish not only one's goals but to motivate others to reach theirs as well.

Nominated by: Nicole Goedhart, Arlie Ricasa



Rafael Mancera

Major: Nuclear and Electrical Engineering

Main Educational Goal: To obtain a Master's Degree from the Nuclear Engineering program at UC Berkeley.

Life Goals: To contribute toward ongoing research in nuclear fusion and its implementation as an environmentally friendly, unlimited source of inexpensive energy.

Significant Achievements: Intern at NASA/ California Space Grant Consortium microcomputer and robotics; SWC President's List; Math, Physics, and Chemistry tutor for the MESA Center.

How would you like others to remember you: As an ambitious and optimistic person who loved to share his passion in the sciences with others.

Nominated by: Dr. Raga Bakhiet



Shanna McCravey

Major: Biophysics

Main Educational Goal: To transfer and eventually earn a Ph.D.

Life Goals: To find an alternative to animal testing and one day win the Nobel Prize for my research.

Significant Achievements: Intern at NASA/ California Space Grant Consortium; SWC President's List; President of Chemistry Club.

How would you like others to remember you: As someone who had a passion for science and its use in saving our world.

Nominated by: Dr. Raga Bakhiet



Alex Mendoza

Major: Political Science

Main Educational Goal: To transfer and complete a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science from UCLA to enable me to advocate for the expansion of access to higher education within the San Diego community.

Life Goals: To continue serving as a conduit of the diverse community college student demographic and work to transform the realities of under-represented populations. I am considering a career in higher education as a professor.

Significant Achievements: ASO Senator and Chair of Constitution Committee; CCCP Scholar at UCLA; Dean's List; Member of the Puente Project; Recipient of ASO Higher Scholastic Scholarship.

2016 Recipient of: ASO Higher Scholastic Scholarship.

How would you like others to remember you: As an ambitious student leader who led his peers by example, sought to inspire the success of those around him, and worked diligently toward the development of his personal convictions regardless of adversity.

Nominated by: Joyce Bayles



Monserrat Meza

Major: Art History

Main Educational Goal: To transfer to a four-year university and obtain a Master's Degree.

Life Goals: To become an instructor at a community college.

Significant Achievements: President of Psi Beta Honor Society; Member of Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society; Member of Power Study at SWC; President's List; VP's Honors List.

2016 Recipient of: ASO Higher Scholastic.

How would you like others to remember you: I would like to be remembered as a friend who shared a positive attitude.

Nominated by: April Brenner



Cynthia Ochoa

Major: Theater Arts

Main Educational Goal: To transfer and eventually earn a Master's Degree.

Life Goals: To become a professor and a theater director. I want to inspire my audience to reflect on the important issues that have driven me in life and motivate others through the arts and theater.

Significant Achievements: Outstanding Design Student at SWC Theater Department; Outstanding Ensemble Member; Recipient of the Moliere Award; Play Head Coordinator.

How would you like others to remember you: As someone who had to face her personal fears and decided to inspire others through her own examples.

Nominated by: Michael Buckley



Matthew Isaiah Ortiz

Major: Business Management

Main Educational Goal: To transfer to SDSU and obtain a Master's Degree in Sports Management or Business Law.

Life Goals: To work for a major sports team by becoming a general manager or work as a negotiations team.

Significant Achievements: Intern at the SWC Small Business Development Center; Vice President's Honors List; Member of Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society; Volunteer at VITA Tax; Co-President of SWC Business Club.

2016 Recipient of: ASO Campus Involvement Scholarship; Corky McMillin Memorial; Mike Conlin Memorial Scholarship.

How would you like others to remember you: As the guy who just refuses to give up!

Nominated by: Elisabeth Shapiro, Henry Aronson, Asher Allan, Diana Avila, Maria Martinez-Sanabria



Melissa Rodriguez

Major: English

Main Educational Goal: To transfer to the UC system and earn a Bachelor's Degree in English, then obtain a Master's Degree in Education.

Life Goals: To become a teacher and have a career in education while staying active in the community; helping students and community members on their path towards education and personal development.

Significant Achievements: Currently the ASO President and SWC Student Trustee; student organizer at South Bay Democratic Headquarters; former ASO senator.

2016 Recipient of: Lopez Family Scholarship.

How would you like others to remember you: As someone who devotes her life to helping others in education and service.

Nominated by: Dr. Max Branscomb



Bruno Tirado

Major: Sociology

Main Educational Goal: To transfer to a four-year university to earn a Bachelor's Degree and then obtain a Master's Degree.

Life Goals: To become a teacher at the high school level and then a counselor to help students succeed. I would later like to become an assistant principal and then a principal.

Significant Achievements: Region X EOPS Top 10 Student Leadership Recipient; California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) Scholar (Athletics); Member of Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society; Awards of Excellence in English and Spanish; Assistant coach for discus, diving, football, shot put, and wrestling.

How would you like others to remember you: As someone who never gave up in life, and the one that starved for success and nothing else.

Nominated by: Nicole Goedhart and Leticia Diaz



Yelitza Valdez

Major: Child Development

Main Educational Goal: To transfer to SDSU and obtain a teaching credential in elementary school education.

Life Goals: Continue my education to earn a Master's Degree to become an elementary school counselor.

Significant Achievements: Member of Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society; Coordinated fundraising at SWC for her reading class; teaches Bible studies to children and counsels couples at church.

How would you like others to remember you: I would like to be remembered as a hardworking and devoted mother.

Nominated by: Carla Edwards



Jose Antonio Vera II

Major: Art

Main Educational Goal: To transfer to either UC Davis or CSU Long Beach to complete a B.A. in Fine Arts and then an MFA in Ceramic Arts.

Life Goals: To become a college art professor in ceramic arts and then aim for an administrative position as a Dean in a School of Art.

Significant Achievements: ASO Senator for the School of Arts, Communication, & Social Sciences; MESA Center tutor; Intern at NASA/California Space Grant Consortium microcomputer and robotics; President's List for Academic Achievement.

2016 Recipient of: ASO Higher Scholastic Scholarship; Chula Vista Art Guild Scholarship; Crystal Veytia Memorial Scholarship.

How would you like others to remember you: As a strong advocate for the cultural arts among the students, and a leader.

Nominated by: Dr. Raga Bakhiet, William Kinney, John Lewis



Yousra Yassein

Major: Applied Mathematics and Aerospace Engineering

Main Educational Goal: To earn a Bachelor's Degree in Aerospace Engineering and a Ph.D. in Applied Mathematics.

Life Goals: To work for NASA as an aerospace engineer and help improve the flight capabilities of spacecrafts; I also plan to work at the cutting-edge of mathematics research and develop new theorems.

Significant Achievements: ASO Executive Secretary; Member of Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society; Intern at NASA/California Space Grant Consortium microcomputer and robotics; Academic Excellence Award recipient; SDSU aerospace engineering intern; Intern at MESA summer research academy; President's List; Vice President of Arduino Inventions and Robotics club.

2016 Recipient of: ASO Campus Involvement Scholarship.

How would you like others to remember you: Someone who made a difference in the scientific community and inspired others to strive to make their dreams come true.

Nominated by: Dr. Raga Bakhiet