



NEWS

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Redondo Beach Teen to Address El Camino College Classmates

Though her goal has always been to transfer to a university, El Camino College student Rachael Kartsonis still finds it hard to say goodbye.

She began taking classes at the Torrance-area campus when she was just 13: learning, growing, succeeding. She completed her degree last term at age 16, and is considered one of the youngest students to ever graduate from El Camino College – a distinction she shares with her older brother, who graduated three years ago.

And now, at age 17, she will address her classmates on June 9 at the 59th annual commencement ceremony.

“I love El Camino College, it has been such a wonderful opportunity for my family to be involved with this school,” she said. “It is an amazing campus with a wonderful student body. I don’t ever want to leave. I earned enough credits for my degree last semester, but I wanted to stay, so I took some more courses this semester that could transfer to the university level.”

Rachael’s brother, David Kartsonis, graduated from El Camino College in 2003, also at age 16. Now 19, David will graduate from the University of California at Santa Barbara with a bachelor’s degree in literature, two days after the El Camino College ceremony. The Kartsonis family plans to attend both events.

Rachael has been involved in many campus activities during her time at El Camino College. She is the current president of both the Alpha Gamma Sigma Honor Society and the Spanish Club, which she founded.

She served on the college’s selection committee to help recommend a new vice president of student services; and she was active in the Onizuka Space Science Day Committee, work that was particularly rewarding to her because attending Space Science Day as youngster was her introduction to El Camino College. In service to her hometown, she is the former chair of the Redondo Beach Youth Commission.

“El Camino doesn’t only instill knowledge from the classes we took, we learn from the people we met, and cultural activities we do,” she said. “That instills a passion in people through all the events we hold and I think people are motivated through that. I’ll take that sense of passion with me to the university,”

Rachael plans to major in literature and attend the University of California in the fall, either at the San Diego, Santa Barbara, or Los Angeles campus. A master's and doctorate degree are also in her long-range plans. Inspired by many outstanding faculty members at El Camino College, her career goals are set on teaching, perhaps on the college level.

"It's not just about academics here at El Camino, but a real sense of being a part of something great," she said. "We are not just sitting back and watching, we are taking part in our education and what is going on around us."

"There are so many things happening on campus and so many different people to meet. We are a community. We are a true community college."

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