



NEWS

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El Camino College Historic Fund-raising Effort Nets Substantial Southern California Edison Donation

The El Camino College Foundation recently received a substantial donation from Southern California Edison at the launch of an event to announce a new scholarship program.

Pedro Pizarro, SCE executive vice president, power operations, presented a \$200,000 check to El Camino College President Thomas M. Fallo at an event hosted by the ECC foundation and prominent South Bay philanthropists Melanie and Richard Lundquist, who likewise challenged others to support the cause. The money will be used to fund scholarships at El Camino College and a few other community colleges in Southern California. Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and dozens of other elected officials from throughout the South Bay communities also attended.

The reception served as an official launch of a fund-raising drive in support of the statewide Osher Scholarship Endowment Program. The effort includes plans to raise \$1 million in matching funds to offer scholarships to the neediest of El Camino College's students.

ECC alumni Rachael Kartsonis and Johnny Torres both spoke at the event, sharing their experience at the college. Rachael spoke about how she "grew up" at El Camino College – she began taking classes when she was just 13, and is considered one of the college's youngest graduates. Johnny talked about his academic history with pride, relating stories about how he entered El Camino College as a high school dropout, barely able to read or write, and is now he's headed to the university of his dreams.

"This past June I earned two degrees from El Camino College and I was admitted to every university I applied to," he said. "The hardest decision for me was choosing between UC Berkeley and UCLA – this fall I will officially become a Bruin. I am truly blessed for being given a second chance and most proud to say that in the spirit of El Camino College, I will always be a 'Warrior'."

El Camino College students have already benefited from the Osher Foundation gift, through \$20,000 in scholarships presented this year at the college's annual Scholarship

Awards Ceremony and Reception. Twenty scholarships of \$1,000 each were awarded to deserving students through funds provided by the Osher gift.

The new scholarship program aims to help even more students.

President Fallo addressed the crowd, speaking of the three most exciting days on the El Camino College campus: first day of classes, graduation, and the annual scholarship reception.

“These student-centered events remind us of our important work at El Camino College,” he said. “It’s about helping students achieve their goals.”

The Bernard Osher Foundation in May 2008 made a generous gift in the amount of \$25 million to the California Community College system to fund scholarships throughout the state. California’s 110 community colleges were challenged to raise \$50 million in matching funds by June 2011. When accomplished, the Osher Foundation will provide an additional \$25 million, bringing the total for endowed scholarships to \$100 million. El Camino College is challenged to raise \$1 million as a participant in the largest scholarship program of its kind in community college history.

Funds raised by the El Camino College Foundation in the matching campaign will remain as the college’s assets and will be invested in the endowment in a pooled equity fund. Funds earmarked for this project and added by the El Camino College Foundation before June 30, 2011 will receive the 50 percent match from the Osher Foundation and be set aside for scholarships for El Camino College students.

California’s Community Colleges, the largest higher education system in the nation, were created to provide affordable and accessible educational opportunities for all Californians. The system serves more than 2.7 million students each year, supplies the majority of the state’s workforce training, and provides a stepping stone for students on the pathway to four-year and graduate degrees.

Although California Community Colleges have managed to keep enrollment fees low, other costs have increased rapidly in recent years. Textbooks, supplies, housing, transportation, child care, and health care now make up nearly 95 percent of a student’s financial burdens. Today, approximately half of all Community College students still have unmet financial need after all financial aid is considered. Every day, California Community College students are forced to abandon their education because of financial hardships.

For information about how to support this historic challenge, contact Katie Gleason at the El Camino College Foundation at 310-660-6040 or kgleason@elcamno.edu.

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