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**For Immediate Release**

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## **El Camino College MESA Students Win State Math Challenge**

Three El Camino College students recently won the inaugural statewide MESA Math Challenge. Timothy Johnson, Fernando Reyes, and Asgedom Woldekidan were recognized as first, second and third, respectively, in the region for their outstanding performance.

"I've always been interested in math, even when I was a little kid, so this math challenge was fun and a great way to apply what I have learned," said Johnson, an 18-year-old Torrance resident who will transfer to Cal Tech in the fall.

"I loved my time here at El Camino College. I had so many great math professors and I really loved the MESA program because that is where I met most of my friends. We took math and science classes together and we got to know each other really well."

The El Camino College MESA (Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement) program provides support to students majoring in math or science so they excel academically and transfer to four-year institutions. MESA's rigorous academics, leadership preparation, and collaborative problem-solving training have helped produce transfer students who graduate as part of the high-tech workforce that is so urgently needed by industry.

Reyes joined the MESA program soon after enrolling at El Camino College. He previously served five years in the U.S. Marine Corps, working as a ground radio communication repairman, then worked at an aerospace firm focusing on manufacturing micro-RF and lasers.

"I saw the other guys I was working with and found out their background and knew they were making more money and going further in their careers," said Reyes, a JPL intern who will transfer this fall to Cal Poly Pomona to study electrical engineering. "I thought, 'I can do this' – and here I am. My whole experience at El Camino College was great; MESA was the best environment for studying and working with other students who have the same goals."

The MESA Math Challenge included a test modeled on the American Mathematical Association of Two-Year Colleges (AMATYC) competition and included 20 questions. Students were given 60 minutes to answer the questions.

Johnson and Reyes received medals in recognition of their achievement at "Los Angeles Metro MESA Day" at UCLA. More than 19 MESA community college programs from throughout the state and a total of 183 students participated in this year's competition.