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El Camino College Launches New Career Advancement Academy

Jessica Gallegos has short-term goals, long-term goals, and the determination to make it all happen. She's ready for a new career.

After graduating from Bishop Montgomery High School in 2005, Jessica spent the past five years working two – sometimes three – jobs to take care of her family. She tried teaching and social work, but neither were the right fit. In June, she received a layoff notice from her job.

On her mother's recommendation, she decided to try a job in the aerospace field, where her mother had worked her entire career.

"I started researching careers in this industry and I knew this would be the right place for me, both with the education and future job opportunities," Jessica said. "I actually did apply and interview with one of the aerospace companies as an apprentice, but I quickly learned that without any training, I would not be someone they would be interested in hiring. At that point, the interviewing panel said I needed to go to El Camino College."

Jessica is enrolled in the new Career Advancement Academy at El Camino College to get the education and training she needs for her new career choice. The one-year program begins in the fall and will focus on careers in machine tool technology and welding. An electrical utility technology program will be added in the spring.

"At this point I'm going to work hard and focus on this program," said Jessica, who will also volunteer in a machine tool technology classroom at Hawthorne High School this fall to help younger students while also furthering her own education and skills.

"I'm going to get as much training as I can and make myself as prepared as possible so that someday I will be someone a company would want to hire."

The Career Advancement Academy at El Camino College is part of a statewide initiative designed to increase the access to higher education that leads to jobs. The program combines career technical education with basic skills in high-demand career areas where new workers are needed immediately.

Funded by a \$662,700 grant from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, the Career Advancement Academy also has technical support from the Careers Ladders Project.

Students in the program benefit from: numerous career skills workshops covering topics such as resume writing, interviewing, job retention, interpersonal skills relating to the workplace, industry specific "green" classes, and total quality management. Books are also paid for, in addition to workplace safety boots for each student. The program culminates in an exclusive job fair with employers looking to hire.

"I am really looking forward to this program, I want to do well," said Jessica, who added that bachelor's and master's degrees are part of her long-term goals. "Through this program, I really think that so many doors are going to open for me and I'm going to grow, not just from the education, but as a person.

"I'm dedicating myself to my career goals this year and I'm not letting anything get in my way."

For more information about the El Camino College Career Advancement Academy, go to <http://www.elcamino.edu/academics/indtech/career-advancement-academy/index.asp> or call 310-660-3589.