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El Camino College Student's Success Story Includes Transfer to UCLA

Solimar Flowers was waiting for the right time to make a change. The thought of going to college was always in the back of her mind, but for the last 18 years she was busy raising her two daughters while working as a nursing assistant. Then came a point about two years ago when she found herself in a situation where her job was coming to an end, her divorce became final, and her teenage daughters were ready for more independence.

"I saw the opportunity and decided to take it," said Flowers, who will celebrate her 38th birthday on June 8, just two days before she graduates with honors from El Camino College on June 10 at Murdock Stadium. "I thought the timing was right. I was living in Los Angeles and one of my sisters told me about El Camino College. I wasn't sure how to get started back then, but now I don't want to stop."

Flowers grew up in Belize and moved to California after graduating from high school. She was an outstanding student in her early years and managed to transition that success into her college career, which now includes plans to transfer to UCLA to pursue a major in sociology.

Approximately 174 El Camino College students were admitted to UCLA for the fall. Several were admitted into UCLA's highly selective programs: two to the School of Theatre, Film & Television, three to the School of Nursing, and 13 were admitted to the School of Engineering and Applied Science.

A recipient of the 2011 El Camino College Presidential Scholar Award for the Behavioral and Social Sciences Division, Flowers maintained a 4.0 grade point average each semester, was a member of the Honors Transfer Program, and made the Dean's List each semester. She was also a member of Alpha Gamma Sigma, the college's academic honors society and service organization. The group recently honored her with an award for club participation.

Flowers was chosen as a recipient of the Exemplary Achievement Scholarship at the recent Honors Transfer Council of California Student Research Conference, one of only 20 awarded statewide. Mentored by ECC anthropology professor Marianne Waters, her award-winning research is titled, "The Need for Enrichment in Captive Primate Populations: Capuchin Monkeys as a Case Study." In addition, her work placed second in the 2011 El Camino College Anthropology Research Symposium.

As part of the EOPS program, Flowers received additional support and the Lisa Whitehead Scholarship. She plans to pursue a career in public service, but her education comes first. After earning her bachelor's degree from UCLA, she would like to earn master's and doctorate degrees from Harvard University.

"It is possible to do it all with a lot of hard work and El Camino College really helped me get here," she said. "I started in the counseling center and asked a lot of questions and spoke to a lot of people. They give out tons and tons of information. There are so many resources available at El Camino College; you just have to know how to use them. And I did."

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