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El Camino College's Young Scholars Program for High School Students Offers a Look at STEM Careers

As an aspiring writer, Glen Abalayan wasn't sure how well he'd fit into a class about science and engineering. He was so unsure that during his first day at El Camino College's STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) Young Scholars Summer Program, he planned to pass a power circuit project off on a classmate. At the last minute, though, Abalayan decided to give it a try and was one of the first to successfully assemble a working power source on the computer.

"This quick lesson instantly changed my view of the Young Scholars Program and made me rethink the way I approach class," said Abalayan, a junior at Torrance High School.

This year's STEM Young Scholars program was another success: a month of workshops, guest speakers, field trips, and interactive lab activities for 25 area high school students. The summer program offered a variety of workshops and presentations designed to introduce young people to the STEM disciplines.

Abalayan said he especially enjoyed the variety of guest speakers, covering careers such as engineering technology, FBI computer forensics, engineering research, biomedical research, and forensic entomology.

"The appearances by such prestigious individuals kept me immersed in the program and excited for what would come next," he said. "I even spent time after class to ask the presenters questions regarding their career and how they got to such a point.

"The program left me with a much greater understanding of not only engineering careers, but also of the pursuit of success and the importance of acquiring a higher education."

Another program highlight for Abalayan was the educational field trips to UCLA and the Aquarium of the Pacific.

"A great memory I had was after the UCLA field trip when I had a conversation with students who were complete strangers just a week before," he said. "The program does a great job in letting students meet new people and does so in a way that does not distract from class.

"The El Camino College Young Scholars Program definitely opened my eyes to the infinite possibilities of having a college degree and I am now actively pursuing it to realize my dreams."

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