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El Camino College | Public Relations & Marketing Department
16007 Crenshaw Blvd., Torrance, CA 90506
Contact: Ann M. Garten, Director, Community Relations
Telephone: (310) 660-3406 | Email: agarten@elcamino.edu

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ECC Debate Team Standout to Transfer with Full Scholarship in the Fall *Debate Team Finishes Another Stellar Year*

Arielle Stephenson just finished a stellar season with the El Camino College debate team. She was named the third best overall speaker in the nation and took home a few gold medals at a national tournament earlier this month.

Now she's taking her debate skills on the road, with plans to transfer this fall with a full scholarship to Southern Illinois University (SIU), widely considered the top debate school in the country. She also received the SIU "Dean's Transfer Scholarship," a merit award for her outstanding grades. The university gives only two scholarships per year, so this is the debate equivalent of being one of the top two draft picks in the nation.

"I am looking forward to transferring in the fall, but I really enjoyed my experience at El Camino College," said Arielle, who will join the Class of 2015 during El Camino College's 68th Commencement, scheduled for 4 p.m. May 15 on the softball field.

"I've been extremely happy with the debate team and loved every minute. After my first day at El Camino College, I knew it was the best decision. In all my classes I had professors who are masters in their fields, and I met so many friends. I really appreciate El Camino College being a part of my life."

The ECC Debate Team wrapped up a fantastic year by once again winning the national title at the Phi Rho Pi Community College National Tournament in Cleveland earlier this month. Arielle came in third overall (debate and individual events) in the nation, while also taking home gold medals in parliamentary debate, Lincoln-Douglas Debate, and impromptu speaking. ECC student Orion Gould was the top speaker in the nation in Parliamentary Debate, and was awarded the Fish-Nelson Award for the Lincoln-Douglas debater who best exemplifies the qualities of intercollegiate competition.

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2-2-2-2-ECC Debate Team

The team also did well at the Nationals Parliamentary Tournament of Excellence (NPTE) in Kansas City. At this tournament, Arielle joined ECC student Brittany Hubble and landed in the top position of any community college two-person debate team in the nation. Only the top 64 individual teams in the nation qualify to the NPTE so it is rare for a community college to be invited. This year, two community college teams made the cut, with ECC's team being the only one to advance to elimination rounds, ending up with the highest ranking of a community college team in the history of the NPTE.

At the National Parliamentary Debate Association (NPDA) tournament, ECC was again one of the few community colleges to attend. The national tournament in Kansas City mainly featured universities competing for top honors. Not only did El Camino College advance a team to the elimination rounds, that team won their double octo-final and octo-final round, besting Texas Tech and University of the Pacific, eventually losing to Lewis and Clark College in the quarter-finals. Francesca Bishop is director of the award-winning forensics program, Joseph Evans is assistant director and Mark Crossman is the debate coach.

Arielle said her experience at these debate team tournaments were highlights of her time at El Camino College – and the reason she enrolled in ECC in the first place. She started at ECC two years ago, right after graduating from Torrance High School. Arielle was a young graduate, just 16 at the time of commencement, so she wanted to stay close to home for college. She said her decision to attend El Camino College was easy, mainly because she wanted to be a part of the college's award-winning debate team.

“I got so much out of my experience at El Camino College,” said Arielle, a business economics major who also plans to attend law school. “It is so cool to be from a community college that is known as the best debate school in the entire nation. I am really excited and honored to be a part of this team and college.”

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