



NEWS

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El Camino College Awards \$1.4 Million in Student Scholarships for 2016-17

El Camino College nursing student Norma Chavez said finding the time to study and earn a degree while a single mother of four children has been a challenge. But with a scholarship and the support of her family, she's found the pathway forward.

Chavez was recently awarded the \$7,500 Noreen Noel Memorial Scholarship, made possible by El Camino College alumnus and donor Russ Noel. Chavez said when she got the call about the scholarship award, she thought it was a joke at first. But when she realized it was real, and she could continue her education, she said she screamed while on the phone with the caller. She hadn't even considered any scholarships, until her medical terminology professor encouraged her to apply.

"It was the best news I could have received," said Chavez, who was raised near Inglewood and graduated from Hawthorne High School in 2001. "This scholarship has made it possible to keep going, because quitting is not an option."

The El Camino College Foundation Scholarship Program has awarded more than \$1.2 million to 550 students for the 2016-2017 academic year. Recipients will have the opportunity to meet donors at the annual Scholarship Awards Ceremony April 14.

This year, 19 incoming students were awarded scholarships of \$1,000 per year for two years via the high school scholarship program, and the Osher Endowed Scholarships will provide \$1,000 scholarships to 217 students this year.

Donor Russ Noel and his family established the Noreen Noel Memorial Scholarship in 2013 in memory of his beloved wife. The generous scholarship spans two years – \$3,500 for the first year and \$4,000 for the second – and covers all fees, books, uniforms and other supplies.

"El Camino College has been an important part of our lives for many years," said Noel. "The community college system is one of the best educational values in the state. Especially the nursing program – students can finish their associate degree and then go to work or earn a bachelor's degree. There are good choices."

Chavez said she hopes to graduate by the end of 2017. She said she's always been interested in the medical field, and after working as a medical assistant for several physicians she realized nursing was the path for her.

Splitting her time between being a mother and a student can be extremely difficult, Chavez said. Some days make her want to cry out of frustration, while other days she realizes everything is worth the struggle. Her children even try to help her prepare for classes, she said.

"They help me study for tests by quizzing me in the car on the way home, or even making flash cards for me," Chavez said. "When I get a good grade, they get so excited because they take it as their grade also. When the test doesn't go too well, they say, 'See, I told you to pay attention.'"

After graduation, Chavez said she hopes to find a job at a hospital. Then, she plans to continue working on her bachelor's degree in nursing and eventually earn a master's degree to work as a certified registered nurse anesthetist or nurse practitioner.

For more information about the El Camino College Foundation Scholarship Program, contact the El Camino College Foundation at www.elcamino.edu/administration/foundation or call 310-660-3683.

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