



NEWS

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For Immediate Release

June 20, 2016

El Camino College Student Josh DuFault Awarded Prestigious Jack Kent Cooke Foundation Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship

Outstanding student to transfer to Stanford; accepted to Yale, Rice and Dartmouth, among others

El Camino College is proud to announce that outstanding student Josh DuFault has been awarded the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship, worth up to \$40,000 per year to complete a bachelor's degree at a four-year college or university.

The U.S. Navy veteran and exemplary computer science honors student recently decided to transfer to Stanford University, after being accepted to numerous highly selective universities from across the country, including Yale, Rice and Dartmouth. A native of Torrance, Josh found the classes and support services he needed at El Camino College, where his mother and grandmother are also alumnae.

“El Camino College has offered me amazing opportunities. There are so many ways to find help with classwork, participate in research projects with the Honors Transfer Program, and tap into other resources,” he said. “There is just so much available – and that all added up to the Jack Kent Cooke scholarship, which is incredible.”

Josh is one of 75 community college students from a competitive nationwide pool to win the scholarship this year. All of the Cooke Undergraduate Transfer Scholars have financial need and strong records of academic achievement as shown by grades, leadership skills, awards, extraordinary service to others, and perseverance in the face of adversity.

The Cooke Foundation Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship is the largest private scholarship in the nation for students transferring from community colleges to four-year colleges and universities. In addition, after earning a bachelor's degree, each Cooke Scholar will be eligible for a scholarship for graduate school worth up to \$50,000 a year for up to four years.

“We were very excited to learn that Josh is a recipient of the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation scholarship. It is an extraordinary award honoring academic excellence, leadership and service to others,” said El Camino College President Dena P. Maloney. “Josh is very deserving of this award, and we wish him the best as he transfers to Stanford University.”

In addition to the Jack Kent Cooke scholarship, Josh was awarded ECC's Mathematical Sciences Wayne and Margaret Bemis Scholarship and was a member of the ECC Math Team, which competes in the annual American Mathematical Association of Two-Year Colleges Math Contest. He also worked with Professor Solomon Russell, who inspired his interest in computer science and was a mentor for his research project that won the Outstanding Abstract Award this past spring at the Honors Transfer Council of California Student Research Conference.

Josh's hard work paid off. He was admitted to nearly every university he applied. Closer to home, he was also admitted to UCLA, UC Berkeley, UC Irvine, and UC San Diego. He made his final decision with his wife Sara, who has supported his educational journey.

He enrolled in El Camino College after serving 13 years in the U.S. Navy, where he enlisted after graduating from high school in Irvine. Josh worked as a cryptologist and served four overseas deployments in Iraq and in Afghanistan. He then decided it was time to continue his education and moved back to the South Bay to be near his grandparents, who provided additional support.

With assistance from the GI Bill and the ECC Veterans Resource Center, Josh enrolled in January 2015. He soon found he enjoyed computer science and math. He especially liked math, though it was challenging getting back into calculus after being away from the classroom for more than a decade.

"Math was a difficult transition, but Professor Robert Lewis helped me and I also found tutoring on campus," he said. "Soon, after encouragement from Professor Trudy Meyer, I decided to be a math tutor. It was a really rewarding job to help people break through their difficulties. I met so many great people and impressive students. To teach something, you really have to know it cold. And I really enjoyed my math classes."

Actually, Josh liked all his classes – from liberal arts to the sciences.

"Through inspiring professors, it all came together for me in finding that the direction I really wanted to go was the technology and the artificial intelligence route and everything that can bring," he said.

"I was really excited about all of my studies – even history. That is when I met Professor Arthur Verge and he encouraged to apply to the Ivy League universities and the Jack Kent Cooke scholarship. I never even thought to apply. I never saw these other colleges as being on the radar for someone like me – someone on a non-traditional college path. So I applied. I'm glad I did. And I am thankful for everyone at El Camino College who gave me these opportunities and encouraged me to try all these new things."

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