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**For Immediate Release**

**June 21, 2016**

## **Outstanding MESA Student Headed to UC Berkeley**

*Erick Quintanilla found support via ECC's Math, Engineering, Science Achievement (MESA) program*

Recent graduate Erick Quintanilla said a highlight of his time at El Camino College was being a part of the Math, Engineering, Science Achievement (MESA) program.

Erick has been involved with MESA for the past two years. He's a computer science major, and will transfer to UC Berkeley this fall, where he plans to focus on computer engineering.

After an obsession with video games in middle and high school, Erick said he took on a new passion for programming when he entered college.

"I fell in love with it, because it's both so logical yet artistic," added Erick, a Gardena High School alumnus, who is also a 2016 ECC grad. "You're given so much freedom to create."

This year, about 100 MESA graduates will transfer to four-year colleges and universities such as UC Berkeley, UCLA, UC Davis and Cal Poly Pomona. MESA students are offered rigorous coursework, leadership preparation and problem-solving workshops. Other perks include counseling support and access to the MESA/STEM Center to meet with study groups.

"The El Camino College MESA program provides a variety of academic and enrichment opportunities for students majoring in math, science or engineering," said El Camino College President Dena P. Maloney. "Erick's success is a model for additional students to take their studies to the next level, so they too, are able to excel in their academic and career goals."

Since 2011, 129 scholarships have been awarded to 102 students through a National Science Foundation grant. The total amount of scholarships awarded to MESA/STEM students over the past five years is \$524,000. This year, 11 El Camino College students received a total of \$29,000 in scholarships.

Erick said he's received scholarship support through MESA over the years, and was connected with summer research projects in UCLA as well.

He said MESA's resources helped him navigate his way through higher education and choose his academic path. But Erick, who began at El Camino College in 2011, said the sense of community surrounding MESA is something he'll remember most.

"Truly, the best things I will be taking with me to UC Berkeley are the friendships I've been able to make over the years," he said.

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