



NEWS

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El Camino College Grad Honored by White House for University Research

El Camino College alumna Meghan Yap recently returned from a once-in-a-lifetime trip to the White House to accept an award for her university research.

Meghan, a 2013 ECC graduate who transferred to the University of California, San Diego, accepted a “Champions of Change” award from the Obama administration on April 14. As an intern at UC San Diego Medical School’s Center on Gender Equity and Health, Meghan is working to develop a sexual violence policy and best practice recommendations to support victims of college sexual assault.

Along with Meghan, nine other students from around the country were honored in a ceremony involving Vice President Joe Biden and Tina Tchen, executive director of the White House Council on Women and Girls. Meghan works with college administrators and resource centers to analyze campus policies and promote evidence-based, trauma-informed practices.

A victim of sexual assault herself, Meghan said her experience helps guide her work with the university and her research. She works as a research assistant studying gender-based violence in the school’s global health department.

“I was able to use research and academia to explore my own trauma and work through a lot of things,” said Meghan, who grew up in Hawthorne.

At El Camino College, she was an excellent student, and worked with the college’s Supplementary Instruction program. “El Camino College was a great experience, it gave me the time and space I needed to grow and decide what I wanted to do,” said Meghan.

Marianne Waters, an anthropology professor at El Camino College, said she’s not at all surprised by what her former student and assistant has achieved.

“I’m so thrilled to see that Meghan’s hard work and dedication were recognized with such a prestigious award,” Waters said. “She is a wonderful individual with a big heart. She’s very dedicated to social justice issues, helping others make a difference in this world.”

Meghan pushes for all colleges to do two main things to protect sexual assault survivors: to adopt a zero-tolerance policy for sexual violence and to create a supportive system for survivors that can help reduce the chance of post-traumatic stress disorder. When sexual violence affects one out of five female students, the impact of such systems is especially important, she said.

“We really need to believe and support these women, and do everything possible for our survivors of campus sexual assault to graduate and thrive,” Meghan added.

On top of her research at UC San Diego, Meghan is a resident advisor, college ambassador, campus tour guide and administrative office assistant.

She will graduate this summer with a dual degree in biological anthropology and global health. She plans to pursue a master’s degree in public health or public policy, with a possibility of law school in her future.

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