



NEWS

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El Camino College's Top Students Set to Transfer

If **Vincent Armstrong** ran into some of his old buddies from Torrance High School, he's pretty sure they would never believe that he is a top El Camino College graduate and headed to UC Berkeley. He's not entirely sure he believes it himself.

"In high school I was definitely not the best student – I would not have been able to attend a four-year school at that time," said Armstrong, an honors student who will study history at Berkeley, with a goal of pursuing further degrees after completing his undergraduate work.

"I came to ECC a more mature student with the goal of transferring to a four year school. I was met by awesome faculty members that were determined to help me succeed."

Armstrong, a member of the Honors Transfer Program (HTP), will join several classmates at the University of California at Berkeley in the fall, following an outstanding academic career at El Camino College.

"The truly great thing is that El Camino College provided me with amazing and supportive professors that are all very knowledgeable in their disciplines," said Armstrong, who was the ASO director of academic affairs, a member of the Alpha Gamma Sigma honors society and a student Ambassador.

"ECC also offers many great programs that encourage student success."

Ugoeze Nwonkedi is an El Camino College biology major who will also transfer to UC Berkeley this fall – she has been awarded the UC Regents' and Chancellor's Scholarship which covers most of her financial need for all her undergraduate studies.

"I have been privileged to have had some of the finest teachers here at ECC, like Dr. Shankweiler, Dr. Palos, Dr. Tontcheva, just to name a few," said Nwonkedi, who graduated from Leuzinger High School and also attended high school in her native Nigeria.

"The professors are very knowledgeable and present the material in a way that is relatable to students and enables them to succeed in the course. I think one of my biggest challenges was getting used to the new academic environment and time management. It is no longer high school where the teachers are always after you to keep up with the work. I felt I really had to grow up and be mature and responsible with my academic life and I feel it really pushed me to the level I am at now."

Christopher Borgia will attend UCLA in the fall, one of 84 outstanding El Camino College students to be admitted to the Westwood campus, a record number. In fact, El Camino College is ranked No. 1 in the state for admission rate increases to UCLA. Among large regional community colleges, only El Camino College increased its honors transfer admission rate to UCLA, while other area colleges saw their rates drop.

As a returning student, Borgia wasn't sure what to expect at El Camino College. After leaving his first try at college in New Jersey where he grew up, he worked his way up the corporate ladder at Domino's Pizza, eventually moving to California to own and operate his own store. He set up shop in Westwood, meeting many students along the way, then owned other pizza franchises in the South Bay where he met El Camino College students.

"A young woman was working for me, and was thinking about attending ECC – I kept talking to her, convincing her to go to school, and I think I convinced myself to go there, too," said Borgia, 42, who enrolled in 2001 and became involved in the HTP.

"It had been so long since I had been to school, so I went to drop-in counseling – I really didn't know what to expect. Everyone was so helpful and really got me on my way. As an older student, I didn't know if I would fit in, but I made so many new friends and I think the teachers appreciated it that I was going back to school."

Borgia will now pursue an art history degree at UCLA, a topic he discovered in his favorite classes taught by Lucy Alamillo. His career goal includes the art dealing industry.

"At my first try in college, my grades weren't that good," he said. "This time around, I was extremely serious and focused, bringing in a 4.0 and still running my businesses. I was really thankful at ECC that people were there to suggest my career path, and even different opportunities at the college. I really value my education at El Camino College – I have a feeling the caliber of teachers at ECC will rival any at UCLA."

Jose Guzman is on his way to study cultural anthropology at UCLA, a topic that interests him because he is truly interested in people and world cultures. His studies will focus on Mesoamerica, with inspiration coming from many El Camino College instructors, particularly history professors Jason Suarez and Arthur Verge.

"El Camino has sufficiently prepared me to face the world," he said. "At first, I felt indifferent about my entire experience here – I am the first-ever from my family to go to college. Now I know that my El Camino College education will take me anywhere I want to go – it's up to me now."

"The education El Camino College has given me will take me face to face with life, but it will be up to me to make the most of it, and I will. You will know about me in the future, thanks to the education I received at El Camino."