



NEWS

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El Camino College Expands Honors Transfer Program

For El Camino College honors student Jerry Hernandez, it all started with the ECC Science Club.

Hernandez said he “went in blind” when he enrolled in ECC’s Fall 2011 semester, right after graduating from Mira Costa High School. Once at El Camino College, he had no idea what he wanted to do, and no idea how to find out. So he asked around and heard about the Science Club.

“I joined the club and that’s when I started being involved on campus and taking charge of my education,” he said. “I also joined the Honors Transfer Program (HTP). Joe Holliday is one of the advisers and he showed me the way. As a first-generation college student, higher education just wasn’t something I considered, and I needed help. Now I’m majoring in geology and I want to teach.”

Hernandez is already getting a bit of teaching experience by volunteering with the Mira Costa High School Marching Band. He played tuba with the group for four years, and now assists the director with the visual aspects of marching band.

“I love getting these teaching opportunities, and with my schoolwork and activities, I probably take more advisement from the Honors Transfer Program than other students,” said Hernandez, who is also the Honors Transfer Club president. “I have to figure out how to make it all work. The counselors really care about students and go out of their way to help. Being in the HTP has made a big difference to me.”

This fall, El Camino College welcomed a record-breaking 225 new students into the Honors Transfer Program. The HTP is one of the top honors programs in California, based on enrollment, participation in state honors events, and transfers to universities.

This year, 20 students HTP transferred to UCLA, eight went to the University of California at Berkeley, and several left the state to attend institutions such as Cornell University and the University of Hawaii.

Consistently ranked No. 2 in the state for Transfer Alliance Program (TAP) admissions into UCLA, TAP students from ECC boast an impressive 73.7 admit rate to the top-ranked Los Angeles-area university. Additionally, ECC’s HTP students have been the second-largest feeder college to UCLA for the past five years.

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Hernandez plans to transfer to a university next year – he is considering Oregon State University. In the meantime, he will continue to work on his geology studies, while also playing in a drum and bugle corps and volunteering with a soccer league his father founded in Lennox. His efforts were recognized last year when he was honored with the college’s first-ever Inter-Club Council (ICC) Leadership Award for his work as the Science Club’s ICC representative.

“The Honors Transfer Program has benefited me in so many ways,” he said. “From priority registration that helps me get the classes I need, to the assistance from counselors. I think being in the HTP really does a good job of encouraging us to work hard to get it done and transfer to a university.”

HTP students have access to priority registration, academic and social interaction with other highly motivated students, smaller class sizes, designation of HTP on El Camino College transcripts/degrees, and enrichment seminars. The HTP offers a unique learning environment that stresses scholastic excellence. The major objective of the program is to better prepare highly-motivated students for transfer to a university by focusing on enhanced writing, reading and study skills.

Honors courses cover a variety of disciplines, including astronomy, art, English, chemistry, math, and psychology.

This past spring, the HTP sponsored 20 student presenters at the Honors Transfer Council of California Student Research Conference at UC Irvine. The ECC contingent received two out of the 20 Student Excellence Scholarships and one of the Outstanding Poster Awards.

Due to new budget allocations, El Camino College has been able to accept 50 percent more students into the HTP, making it the second-largest honors program in the state. This additional funding will allow the program to increase summer staffing, update equipment, and hire a permanent secretary.

“I would really recommend El Camino College and the Honors Transfer Program to any high school student,” Hernandez said. “It gives you time to figure out what you want to do at a low cost and there is plenty of diversity and opportunities to meet different people – different age ranges, different experiences, and different backgrounds, too. It’s a good place.”

For more information about the El Camino College Honors Transfer Program, go to www.elcamino.edu/academics/honorstransfer/.

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