

UC Alumni Change the World Scholarship Winner: I Want to Add Value to Myself



Gerardo Ameriel Jaimes takes immense pride in being the first member of his family to earn a college degree.

As the most recent winner of UC San Diego Extension's quarterly [UC Alumni Change the World Scholarship](#), Jaimes gives thanks to his parents, who immigrated to the U.S. from Mexico more than 20 years ago when he was only 3

years old.

"I wanted to fulfill their dream that I would earn a college education," said Jaimes. "That's been my dream, too."

With the \$5,500 scholarship, he intends to continue his educational pursuits with Extension courses.

"I want to add value to myself, as well as learn things I don't know," said Jaimes, who earned a bachelor's degree in ethnic studies at UC San Diego in 2013.

His academic journey began several years ago with his involvement in Extension's [Academic Connections](#) program while attending San Diego's Madison High School.

Under the direction of Extension's Edward Abeyta, Academic Connections connects promising local high school students with college-level subject matter courses that are led by graduate students in a wide array of academic disciplines.

"That's where I first learned about the college experience and what it takes to get there," said Jaimes. During his high school years, he took the bus from his home in Southeast San Diego to attend Madison while Lincoln High was being re-built.

Going to UC San Diego “helped me find my passion,” he said. “I didn’t really know what I wanted to be. I had to figure myself out. At UCSD, I had the freedom to pursue the kind of classes and subjects that I was interested in.”

“Gerardo’s compelling story is at the heart of our mission,” said Abeyta, director of Extension’s K-16 programs, including Academic Connections. “We’re proud to honor him and equally grateful to everyone who applied.”

In Jaimes’ current role as an instructor at College Apps Academy, a program within Reality Changers, a San Diego-based social services agency, he helps high school seniors prepare for college and beyond.

“I like to tell my students that going to college gave me the vocabulary to explain what’s really going on,” he said, “not only in my life but all around us.”

Alumni Change the World Scholarship

Awarded on a quarterly basis, UC San Diego Extension’s Alumni Change the World Scholarship is open to anyone who has earned a bachelor’s degree or a graduate degree from a University of California campus, including UC San Diego.

The qualifying requirement is purposely broad, and can range from cultural enrichment to regional economic development. Extension seeks to reward alumni who demonstrate the promise and potential to improve the quality of life in the San Diego region and beyond.

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