



SAN GABRIEL UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

PRESS RELEASE

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San Gabriel Unified High Graduate Beats Adversity to Pursue College

SAN GABRIEL, CA – Facing extreme hardship and homelessness, Del Mar Continuation High graduate Kenneth French beat all odds, refusing to let adversity hold him back from the future he desired. After earning a 3.8 GPA and a 100 percent attendance rate his senior year, he is beginning a new chapter this fall as a freshman at Pasadena City College to pursue a career in medicine or law.

"Del Mar gave me a second chance to prove what kind of student I could be, and I intend to keep being that kind of student so I can achieve my goals," French said.

French earned Most Improved Student Award and the Principal's Scholarship for his academic perseverance at Del Mar, crediting his achievements to the support he received at the school, a California Model Continuation High School.

French moved to Hawaii from California as a young child to live with his mom. Financial hardships brought French back to California in the third grade to live with his father in Pasadena. When he returned, French discovered they did not have a place to live, forcing them to move into a shelter.

"I wasn't motivated to go to school because it was hard to focus when we had personal issues to deal with," French said. "I struggled with certain concepts and didn't feel like I had the support to help me catch up, so I felt like there wasn't a point to learn."

His motivation to improve his academics plummeted by the time French moved to San Gabriel during his sophomore year, when he only attended school once or twice a week. He enrolled at Del Mar as a last chance to get on track to graduate.

Del Mar's personalized approach to learning – which includes tailored instruction, dedicated counseling services and peer encouragement – inspired French to recommit to his studies.

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"Del Mar became a family that helped me become the student I never thought I could be," French said. "Every teacher really pushed me, took the time to ensure I understood the material, and gave me additional support when needed."

Del Mar teachers and staff helped to boost French's academic performance, including history teacher Katherine Kloster, who encouraged him to get involved in extracurricular activities.

French sampled every activity Del Mar had to offer as his interest in school grew, including becoming a student school board representative and participating in the History Day academic competition team. French won first place in the 2017 History Day LA contest for his paper on the 1968 East L.A. school walkouts and advanced to the state competition.

"Kenneth French has shown tremendous dedication to learning and been an exemplary governing board student representative," SGUSD Superintendent Dr. John Pappalardo said. "He serves as a true role model to other students who may be struggling, demonstrating that with true determination and dedication, they can achieve their potential. We are very proud of his accomplishments and wish him the very best."

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PHOTO CAPTION:

071717_SANGAB_FRENCH: Del Mar High School graduate Kenneth French won the Most Improved Student Award and Principal's Scholarship for overcoming personal challenges and earning a 3.8 GPA his senior year. French, who graduated from Del Mar in June, will attend Pasadena Community College in the fall.

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