



# Whittier Union HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

*To Achieve and Maintain Excellence...*

## NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** March 18, 2022    **CONTACT:** Andrea Garcia    **PHONE:** 909-273-9840

## **Whittier Union Independent Study Student Recognized by Board of Trustees for Resilience, Determination**

**WHITTIER** – When Julio Zermeno was a junior at Pioneer High School, he was reeling academically due to COVID-related school closures and the additional responsibilities of caring for his ailing father. Behind in school credits, Zermeno transferred to Sierra Vista High School, finding its independent study program ideal for dealing with the peaks and valleys of his life.

Today, Zermeno is a mid-year Class of 2022 Sierra Vista High graduate, after developing a rhythm of productivity that allowed him to complete all his school credits by December 2021. For his resolve and effective use of time, Zermeno was recognized with an Award of Merit by the Whittier Union Board of Trustees during its March 9 Board meeting.

Zermeno outlined his success in an essay for the Sierra Vista Spartan December newsletter, detailing his difficulties in English class and organizing long-term assignments. Zermeno also shared how working at his own pace allowed him to make up a lot of academic ground in a short period. The essay came to the attention of the Board, who reached out to Zermeno to commend him for his effort.

“Sierra Vista has helped me progress from being way behind to graduating early, which is something no one would have predicted,” Zermeno said. “I would like to thank everyone who has helped me reach my goals, especially my family, my teacher Mr. Smith, who monitored my progress to ensure I would receive my diploma, and the Board, for their support and guidance.”

Since his freshman year, Zermeno consistently had trouble writing the required essays for English class and had difficulty working well outside of a classroom environment. During school closures, Zermeno spent most of his time in his room, having lost motivation to keep trying in school. In January 2021, Zermeno transferred to Sierra Vista High School.

At Sierra Vista, Zermeno found a system that fit with his study habits and a teacher, Larry Smith, who created a timetable for credit recovery that would allow Zermeno to graduate early if he dedicated time to his studies. Zermeno showed an amazing capacity for getting work done, and in one nine-week quarter, he earned 22 credits and was recognized with Sierra Vista’s Top Producer award.

Zermeno’s advice for students undergoing credit recovery and considering independent study is to be persistent, as completing only one or two assignments can provide the inspiration for staying on track to graduate. Zermeno also advises students to steer clear of distractions and have a workplace that is quiet and conducive to academics.

The newly graduated Zermeno remains connected to Sierra Vista, taking advantage of the school’s new College and Career Center and exploring the variety of career pathways at local community colleges and meeting with America’s Job Center of California staff to learn more about its youth employment program.

“Julio has demonstrated that he is dedicated to both his education and his family and has displayed an amazing amount of maturity as a 17-year-old in balancing both and becoming a high school graduate,” Sierra Vista Principal Dr. Margie Moriarty said. “We are tremendously proud of him and cannot wait to see what the future brings.”

### PHOTO CAPTION

**WUHSD\_ZERMENO:** Sierra Vista High School Class of 2022 graduate Julio Zermeno was recognized with an Award of Merit by the Whittier Union Board of Trustees during its March 9 Board meeting.

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#### OUR MISSION:

The Whittier Union High School District provides all students with an engaging, quality standards-based instructional program delivered by a well-trained staff resulting in improved student achievement. Whittier Union High School District works to achieve and maintain excellence in providing a comprehensive education for all students.

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