



# Whittier Union HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

*To Achieve and Maintain Excellence...*

## NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** June 8, 2023    **CONTACT:** Andrea Garcia    **PHONE:** 909-447-2403

## **Whittier Union Celebrates Academic Achievements, Honors Class of 2023 with Stadium Commencement Ceremonies**

**WHITTIER** – Whittier Union High School District’s Class of 2023 scholars celebrated their academic achievements and triumphs as they crossed the graduation stage, hearing heartfelt speeches that reflected on their time in the District, during commencement ceremonies held June 5 to 7.

The District celebrated graduates from its five comprehensive high schools, two alternative high schools and adult school. Nearly 2,700 graduates, accompanied by educators, administrators and families, shed tears of joy as they enjoyed exhilarating performances from the District's band and choir groups.

Santa Fe High School, Sierra Vista High School and Frontier High School seniors, along with Whittier Union Adult School graduates, were cheered on by their families and friends during ceremonies on June 5, followed by California High School and Whittier High School graduations on June 6. La Serna and Pioneer high schools concluded the festivities with ceremonies on June 7.

The District also honored graduates who met the criteria for Summa Cum Laude (GPA of at least 4.3), Magna Cum Laude (GPA of at least 4.1 and less than 4.3) and Cum Laude (GPA of at least 3.9 and less than 4.1).

“Our senior year has been one filled with hard work, from stressful college applications to our time-consuming senior projects. We have all had those moments where we lost all motivation to do any work. But here we are, graduating, because we are proud Titans, who take pride in our goals and find the power to pursue them,” Pioneer High Summa Cum Laude graduate Adriana Gonzalez said. “We want to make those who we hold dear proud of what we can accomplish, just like I hope to make my family proud as they watch me from the stage. Congratulations to the Class of 2023.”

During this year's ceremonies, the District's Board of Trustees upheld its new tradition of honoring students from each comprehensive high school with the prestigious 2023 Trustee Award. School staff recommended these scholars for their exceptional academic achievements and unwavering commitment to exemplary citizenship throughout their four years of high school. The 2023 Trustee Award recipients are:

- **Santa Fe High School’s Athena Perez**, who plans to pursue post-secondary education at California Lutheran University and major in psychology with an emphasis on clinical applications.
- **California High School’s Celeste Villa**, who will study pharmacology and drug development at USC in her pursuit to become a pharmacist.
- **Whittier High School’s Trenton Gunderson**, who will study zoology at Cerritos College and plans to further his education at a university in the future and major in animal or veterinary science.

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- **La Serna High School’s Annaliese Veach**, who will pursue a degree in chemical engineering at Johns Hopkins University.
- **Pioneer High School’s Fatima Vazquez**, who will attend UCLA in the fall and study environmental sciences.

“Everyone in this audience was terrified to notice these last five months of high school turn into four weeks, three days, two hours and soon, one minute,” Santa Fe High School Summa Cum Laude graduate Eric Arroyo said during his speech. “Once that final minute passes, you will start the rest of your life at your own discretion. When you look back at this time and ask yourselves ‘what have I done since then [graduation],’ ‘where am I going’ and ‘who do I love,’ remember to be present for your struggles so that you can find the beauty within them. There is no such thing as a life that is better than yours.”

Whittier Union’s Class of 2023 graduates are matriculating to four-year universities, prestigious higher education institutes and the armed forces in the fall. These include USC, UCLA, the University of California, Berkeley, New York University and more. Several District graduates have also been awarded prestigious local and national scholarships, including the 2023 Gates Scholarship, the local Santa Fe Springs Chamber/ League Youth Enrichment Fund Destiny Scholarship, the Dell Scholarship and the full-ride Posse Foundation Scholarship.

"I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the remarkable Class of 2023 on this momentous achievement," Superintendent Dr. Monica Oviedo said. "Each graduate has exemplified unwavering dedication, going above and beyond to reach this pivotal milestone. As they embark on their promising future, we are confident that their time at Whittier Union has equipped them with a quality education, paving the way for lifelong success. We celebrate these graduates for doing *Whatever It Takes* 'To Achieve and Maintain Excellence.' Congratulations, Class of 2023!"

### PHOTO CAPTIONS

**WUHS\_D\_GRAD1:** Frontier High School, Sierra Vista High School and the Whittier Adult School held a joint commencement ceremony on June 5, during which 340 students were recognized.

**WUHS\_D\_GRAD2:** Santa Fe High School graduated 421 seniors during its commencement ceremony on June 5.

**WUHS\_D\_GRAD3:** California High School honored 604 seniors during its graduation ceremony on June 6.

**WUHS\_D\_GRAD4:** Whittier High School held its commencement ceremony on June 6, during which 405 seniors were celebrated.

**WUHS\_D\_GRAD5:** Pioneer High School graduated 275 seniors during its June 7 ceremony.

**WUHS\_D\_GRAD6:** La Serna High School celebrated the graduation of 568 seniors during its commencement ceremony on June 7.

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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.

<b>BOARD OF TRUSTEES:</b>	Jaime Lopez President	Gary Mendez Clerk	Dr. Russell Castañeda-Calleros Member
	Dr. Ralph S. Pacheco Vice President	Irma Rodríguez Moisa Member	Dr. Monica Oviedo Superintendent