



# WHITTIER UNION

## HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

*To Achieve and Maintain Excellence...*

NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** March 19, 2025 **CONTACT:** Andrea Garcia **PHONE:** 909-447-2403

## California High School Senior Recovers from Debilitating Illness, Receives Award of Merit

**WHITTIER** – As an incoming freshman, California High School senior Viridian “Viv” Gonzalez got off to a flying start, earning straight A’s in her first semester, with a challenging schedule that included several Honors classes. Her future looked bright; then calamity struck.

Gonzalez fell ill during her second semester and was hospitalized for months, missing a considerable amount of school. When Gonzalez returned to Cal High for her sophomore year, she was still very weak and wheelchair bound but determined to pick up where she left off.

Enrolling in Cal High’s Health Academy pathway and with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) to guide her, Gonzalez persevered despite her limited mobility, excelling in all her classes and slowly regaining her health. As a senior with a 3.5 GPA and improved health, Gonzalez said she is looking forward to taking the Certified Nurse’s Assistant (CNA) exam this spring.

For her determination to fight back against illness while pursuing a field where she can give back to others, Gonzalez was presented with an Award of Merit by the Whittier Union Board of Trustees during its March 11 Board meeting.

“Cal High was an opportunity to have a fresh start. Even when my illness returned as a freshman, I was still able to have that start at Cal High,” Gonzalez said. “Having teachers and staff members giving me continuous support and encouragement was crucial to my recovery. I’d also like to thank my mom for being by my side throughout this entire time. My struggles were her struggles, and we have endured this together.”

At Cal High, Gonzalez found a family within the network of IEP specialists she worked with every day.

She formed a close bond with Cal High school psychologist Randy Martinez, who emerged as Gonzalez’s strongest advocate on campus, never failing to support her during overwhelming situations and encouraging her decisions.

Gonzalez’s recovery from illness mirrored her determination to excel in her classes. By her junior year, she was out of her wheelchair and had made up most of the credits she had lost while out of school while becoming less dependent on her IEP as the year progressed.

– MORE –

In her junior year, Gonzalez became an active member of Cal High’s Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA) club, joining the leadership team to help plan events and fundraisers. While enrolled in the Health Academy Nursing class, she continues to build her path toward a career in healthcare.

Gonzalez is looking towards a bright future. After completing her CNA exam in the spring, she plans to use her certification to gain exposure to career paths in healthcare, then enroll at Rio Hondo College to begin her undergraduate coursework.

“It is an absolute honor and pleasure to have Viv Gonzalez as part of our Cal High School Health Academy and watch how she has grown personally, physically, and academically,” Cal High Principal Shana Jones said. “We are so proud of the efforts she has put in to truly be the best person she can be. Viv is the epitome of resilience and perseverance and a perfect example of what it means to have Condor pride.”

### PHOTO CAPTION

**WUHSD\_AWARD1:** California High School senior Viridian “Viv” Gonzalez was recognized with an Award of Merit by the Whittier Union Board of Trustees on March 11 for her determination in overcoming illness while pursuing a career dedicated to helping others.

###

#### 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.

#### BOARD OF TRUSTEES

**Dr. Russell Castañeda-Calleros**  
President

**Irma Rodríguez Moisa**  
Vice President

**Josefina E. Canchola**  
Clerk

**Jaime López**  
Member

**Gary Mendez**  
Member

**Dr. Monica Oviedo**  
Superintendent