



# WHITTIER UNION

## HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

*To Achieve and Maintain Excellence...*

NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** April 9, 2025 **CONTACT:** Andrea Garcia **PHONE:** 909-447-2403

## **Whittier Union Senior Celebrated, Receives \$50,000 Edison Scholarship Surprise in Class**

**WHITTIER** – Pioneer High School senior Olivia Jimenez envisions a day when socially assistive robotics will provide equitable and affordable support for children with special needs, helping them with their cognitive development and social skills. Jimenez's goal is to use the field of mechanical engineering as a template for doing good work.

Jimenez became inspired to work in the field of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) after watching her sister, who is autistic, struggle to find the support she needed in under-resourced schools. Jimenez became fascinated with STEM, immersing herself in projects, exploring all possibilities, and searching for answers, a pursuit that led to her becoming Pioneer High's Science Club president.

Jimenez's future is looking bright as she was surprised in class by Edison International representatives, who presented her with an Edison Scholarship worth \$50,000, drawing applause from her classmates and hugs from her family. Jimenez is the first Pioneer High student to receive an Edison Scholarship since 2017.

"I am so surprised by this. I didn't think it was going to happen," Jimenez said. "I love all my STEM classes, from chemistry and calculus to physics. Working with STEM opens a wealth of possibilities to do good work and make the world a better place."

Jimenez has a strong bond with her older sister, Daniela, a Pioneer High Class of 2023 graduate who is currently attending Cal Poly Pomona. Growing up, Jimenez saw how the lack of resources and technological support kept Daniela, and other children with special needs, from achieving their true potential.

"My sister's struggles to access support has taught me that no child's potential should be limited by their external struggles," Jimenez said in her Edison nomination video. "I aspire to use engineering as a conduit for more personalized learning that can enable a larger spectrum of perspectives on global issues to be heard."

Before Jimenez came to Pioneer, she was already a rising academic star, having taken college-level classes in middle school. In 2024, Jimenez took first place in Pioneer's annual Science Fair for her project exploring whether seawater reverse osmosis brine water can be used to power a desalination plant.

The first-place finish qualified Jimenez for the 2024 Los Angeles County Science and Engineering Fair, where the desalination project won a third-place medal in Environmental Engineering.

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That qualified Jimenez's project for the California State Science and Engineering Fair, where it took fourth place in Environmental Engineering.

Jimenez's work was also recognized with a Southern California Paleontological Society Award for Academic Excellence.

"Olivia receiving the Edison Scholarship is truly the cherry on top of an impressive high school career," Pioneer High chemistry teacher Julia Bermudez said. "From her participation in the Los Angeles County and State science and engineering fairs to her multiple college acceptances, it has been a pleasure guiding Olivia through it all. I am forever Olivia's cheerleader."

Jimenez will have her pick of elite universities to attend, having already been accepted to Harvard, Yale, Columbia, UC Berkeley, USC, and UCLA. She is currently undecided on where she will pursue her higher education.

Jimenez received a taste of college life in the summer before her senior year when she attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's (MIT) exclusive MITES program for aspiring STEM majors, where she took college courses and met her peers from across the country.

To qualify for an Edison scholarship, students must maintain a 3.0 GPA, plan to pursue STEM studies at a four-year college or university, live in Edison's service area, show financial need, and submit a video detailing their passion for STEM and what they plan to study in the future.

"I can't say enough about Olivia. She has so much heart. Seeing her surprised in class with her scholarship was pure joy," Pioneer High principal Mary Chapman said. "Olivia is an inspiration as well as a role model on campus. She epitomizes Titan pride and achievement. We all wish the best of luck to Olivia in the future."

## PHOTO CAPTIONS

**WUHS\_D\_EDISON1:** Pioneer High School senior Olivia Jimenez celebrates being awarded a \$50,000 Edison Scholarship. Jimenez is the first Pioneer High student to receive an Edison Scholarship since 2017.

**WUHS\_D\_EDISON2:** Pioneer High School senior Olivia Jimenez is surprised in class by her family, school administrators, and peers after being named a \$50,000 Edison Scholar by Edison International.

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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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