



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 28, 2026 CONTACT: Maria Hernandez PHONE: (909) 447-2406

## **El Monte Union Senior Surprised with \$50,000 Edison Scholarship to Pursue STEM Education**

**EL MONTE** – Arroyo High School senior Gary Chen has been named a 2026 Edison Scholar, earning a \$50,000 scholarship to support his pursuit of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) in higher education. He plans to attend the University of California, Berkeley, where he will study electrical and computer engineering.

The recognition came as a surprise during Chen's Advanced Placement (AP) English Literature class, as students finished the first act of William Shakespeare's "Hamlet." The classroom door opened and a group entered, including Chen's father and representatives from Edison International, delivering the announcement.

"I was swept off my feet when they came into class holding a huge check with my name on it. It all felt amazing," Chen said. "I was so happy, especially for my father, who is not usually an expressive person, but I could tell he was really happy for me."

For Chen, the Edison scholarship is the culmination of a high school journey that has been filled with purpose and opportunity. Chen boasts a 4.46 GPA and will have completed 16 AP courses by the time he graduates. As founder and vice president of Arroyo High School's Impossible Math, Physics, Algorithms, and Chemistry Team – or IMPACT Club – Chen prepares students for the Math Olympiad as well as other competitions. As president of the Science Olympiad Club, Chen helped to guide the team to a ninth-place finish at the 2026 regional in February.

"My goal at Cal Berkeley is to create the next generation of semiconductor devices and improve the energy efficiency with AI. Cal is where this exact high-level research and advancement is taking place, and I am very excited to be a part of it," Chen said. "I also want to use electrical engineering to find solutions to help our environment."

Chen is a self-starter whose interest in STEM began when he was working as a tutor at the Alpha Science Education Institute in Monrovia as a freshman. There, he met an electrical engineer who laid out the field's principles of design and explained how electrical engineering combines with physics and math to spur ideas and innovation.

Chen's love for electrical engineering was cemented after he acquired an internship at the University of Southern California (USC), where he explored circuit filters and signal processing. To obtain the internship, Chen sent proactive outreach emails to the engineering department, asking for an opportunity to come to the school, observe, research, and learn.

"I've only worked with Gary during his senior year, but in my five years as a counselor, he is one of the top students I've supported," Arroyo High counselor Evelyn Saldana said. "It's remarkable to see a student self-study for an AP exam not offered at the school or cold-call his way into an internship at USC. That level of initiative is rare. Gary is mature, highly involved, and sets a strong example for his peers."

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Chen credits his teachers and friends for challenging him academically, especially calculus teacher, Tony Wong. He also said he feels an obligation to help younger students who, like him, had difficulty adapting to the rigors of high school.

“Mr. Wong really makes math interesting and simple at the same time. I could easily grasp the concepts and they sparked my curiosity. Mr. Wong is completely dedicated to his students,” Chen said. “I like to help others, because I was once in their shoes. I just really like going to school and being around my friends and teachers. Arroyo teachers really care and dedicate so much of their time to helping us succeed.”

Chen keeps a busy extracurricular schedule. In addition to leading the IMPACT Club, he serves as Associate Student Body treasurer and participates in Key Club and the California Scholarship Federation. He is also a member of the school’s track and field and cross-country teams and was recently named a Foothill-Citrus Athletic Directors Association Senior Scholar-Athlete of the Year for the Mission Valley League.

As one of just 30 Edison Scholars in Southern California, Chen will use the Edison Scholarship to support his higher education goals in STEM. Outside of his academic commitments, he said he enjoys spending time with friends, reading historical novels, and unwinding with movies and games.

“Congratulations to Gary Chen for being recognized as an Edison Scholar. It has been a pleasure to watch Gary develop into a campus and academic leader, and we wish him all the best as he moves on to UC Berkeley,” Arroyo Principal Gabriel Flores said. “It’s a team effort at Arroyo. We couldn’t develop these outstanding scholars without our dedicated and hard-working faculty and staff. This is what Knight spirit is all about.”

#### **PHOTO CAPTIONS:**

**EMUHSD EDISON SCHOLAR 1:** Arroyo High School senior Gary Chen was one of 30 Southern California high school students to be recognized as a 2026 Edison Scholar, garnering a scholarship worth \$50,000.

**EMUHSD EDISON SCHOLAR 2:** Arroyo High School senior Gary Chen was awarded a \$50,000 Edison scholarship in March, which will allow him to attend UC Berkeley and study electrical and computer engineering. Chen celebrated the moment with his father (second from right) and Edison International representatives.

**EMUHSD EDISON SCHOLAR 3:** Arroyo High School senior Gary Chen celebrates being awarded a \$50,000 Edison International scholarship in March. With Chen from left to right: AP English Lit teacher Hannah Phelps, junior counselor Veronica Trigo, and senior counselor Evelyn Saldana.

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*The vision of the El Monte Union High School District is to empower and motivate our students to be resilient, college and career ready, lifelong learners and contributing members of our global society.*