

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 15, 2026 **CONTACT:** Nancy Yeang **PHONE:** (909) 204-6012

Lynwood High Graduate Receives Prestigious Gates Foundation Scholarship

LYNWOOD, CA – Lynwood High School Class of 2026 graduate Orlando Cruz will pursue his dream of attending a four-year university after being named a 2026 Gates Scholar, earning a full-ride scholarship to the University of California, Irvine.

Cruz graduated with a 4.64 GPA after completing seven Advanced Placement courses and earning two Associate of Arts degrees through Lynwood Unified's AB 288 dual enrollment partnership with Compton College. He plans to major in chemical engineering with the goal of developing life-saving medicines.

"I was really surprised. I didn't know the scholarship was going to be announced that day," Cruz said. "This is very important to me and my family. My mom was really excited and I made her proud."

Cruz credits Lynwood High chemistry teacher Madeline Lee with inspiring his career path after introducing him to the role chemical engineers and chemists play in developing medicine. Her experiences at UC Irvine also helped him envision his future.

"Ms. Lee really inspired me because she showed me everything chemistry can lead to, from pharmaceuticals to petroleum, and I want to pursue the pharmaceutical field and help create medicines that can save lives," Cruz said. "The thing I will miss most about Lynwood High is working with my teachers. They have had such a big impact on my life."

Cruz's passion continued to grow after he was selected for the University of Southern California Viterbi School of Engineering's Summer High School Intensive in Next-Generation Engineering (SHINE) program in 2024, where he conducted research alongside engineering faculty and gained hands-on laboratory experience studying cancer cells.

Beyond the classroom, Cruz served as an intern with the Lynwood Alumni Mentorship Program (LAMP), helping organize District events, such as the annual Girl's STEM Conference and Math-a-thon competition, and provide online tutoring. He also shared his love of science as a member of Lynwood High's Astronomy Club, bringing telescopes to local parks so community members could explore the night sky.

The Gates Scholarship is one of the nation's most prestigious scholarships, recognizing exceptional students from low-income households with funding that covers tuition, fees, housing, books and other educational expenses.

"Orlando is an exceptional scholar, leader and role model who exemplifies the determination and excellence we strive to cultivate at Lynwood High," Principal Ana Gonzalez said. "We are incredibly proud of all he has accomplished and look forward to seeing the impact he will make at UC Irvine and beyond."

PHOTO CAPTION:

CRUZ_GATES_SCHOLAR1: Lynwood High School Class of 2026 graduate Orlando Cruz was named a 2026 Gates Scholar, earning a full-ride scholarship to the University of California, Irvine, majoring in chemical engineering with the goal of developing life-saving medicines.

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