



# Whittier Union HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

*To Achieve and Maintain Excellence...*

## NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** March 27, 2024    **CONTACT:** Andrea Garcia    **PHONE:** 909-447-2403

## **Whittier Union Scholar-Athlete Named 2024 Dell Scholarship Winner, Pursues Post-Secondary Athletic Goals**

**WHITTIER** – When Pioneer High School senior Anthony Hernandez arrived on campus as a freshman, he was an English Learner (EL) with a passion for playing soccer and a talent for motivating his teammates, an intangible skill that led Hernandez to be named captain of Pioneer’s varsity soccer team as a sophomore, a position he has held for three years.

Hernandez is one step closer to fulfilling his dream to play soccer in college after being named a 2024 Michael and Susan Dell Foundation scholar, one of just 500 students nationwide to receive the prestigious honor. The scholarship includes \$20,000 in tuition support, a laptop and textbook credits, as well as exclusive access to Dell scholar services, including counseling, mentorship, and networking.

“I’m pretty surprised I received the scholarship. It feels great that I was chosen to join so many other high-achieving students across the country,” Hernandez said. “Receiving the Dell scholarship is a huge benefit for my family.”

As well as taking EL classes as a freshman, Hernandez enrolled in Pioneer’s college-prep program, Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), a program that showed Hernandez how to take control of his education and help him manage his time to create a perfect balance between school, home, and sports.

“AVID is a community-based program, everyone helps out,” Hernandez said. “There is always someone there to help you and keep you on track. I’m grateful to my AVID teacher, Ms. Dyan Acevedo, for having so much confidence in me. AVID has really made all this possible.”

After one year as an EL, Hernandez passed his English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPAC) exam, reclassifying him as a fluent English speaker. Moving forward, Hernandez began challenging himself academically, taking two semesters of AP English as a junior and receiving an A in each class. In his senior year, Hernandez has taken five additional AP classes, and boasts a 3.9 GPA.

“Anthony is truly a special person,” Acevedo said. “From the beginning of freshman year, during the pandemic and online learning, Anthony always had his camera on and was personable in class. I am so proud of his perseverance. Anthony passed his ELPAC, completed his AVID assignments, and took guidance from the Horizons program. He is a role model for every student at Pioneer.”

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Born into a sports family, Hernandez began playing soccer at five-years-old, emulating his older brother but quickly establishing himself in local club soccer circles. Besides playing the game, Hernandez enjoys the camaraderie of being on a team and making lifelong friends. When Hernandez joined Pioneer’s varsity team, he knew many of his older teammates from his club soccer days.

Hernandez said that his favorite memory at Pioneer is helping to lead his team to the CIF playoffs during his junior year, winning three consecutive games to reach the quarterfinals, before bowing out in a heartbreaking overtime loss.

“That team was made up with a group of seniors that I had known for years in club soccer,” Hernandez said. “Getting the chance to win with that team and those players was very special because Pioneer had not made it that far in the playoffs for a long time. It is the highlight of my sports career.”

Hernandez is looking to major in kinesiology, hoping for a career in athletic training or physical therapy. Hernandez said he is also looking to stay in a small-school environment, like Pioneer’s, and continue to play soccer in college. Though Hernandez has not made an official decision, one of the schools he is considering is Simpson University, a small private college in Redding with a strong athletics program.

The Michael and Susan Dell Foundation provides scholarships for underrepresented students who demonstrate drive, tenacity, and ambition in their quest for a college education. In addition to monetary support, Dell scholars are guaranteed mental health and wellness support, personalized support for academic, financial, and emotional challenges at school, and career services guidance.

“We are justifiably proud of our AVID program, which has helped so many students like Anthony achieve their dream of attending college,” Pioneer High Principal Mary Chapman said. “Our AVID team really knows how to connect with their students, who in turn inspire our instructors with their enthusiasm and dedication to become lifelong learners who succeed in college and career. Congratulations to Anthony for this wonderful achievement!”

### PHOTO CAPTION

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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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