



El Monte Union High School District

Community Committed to College and Career

PRESS RELEASE

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El Monte Union English Learners Fulfill Dream of Attending 4-Year Universities

EL MONTE – El Monte High School seniors Juan Saucedo and Kermina Samaan took different paths to travel to the United States, learn a second language and acclimate to a new home. Still, the challenges they both faced only served to bolster their drive to graduate high school and attend a four-year university.

Saucedo, who arrived from Mexico in 2017, and Samaan, who arrived from Egypt in 2015, both advanced quickly through El Monte High’s English language development (ELD) program, doubling up on English classes and taking summer school classes to complete their college entrance requirements.

After challenging themselves to accelerate their education in order to achieve their goals, Saucedo has been accepted to UC Riverside, where he will pursue mathematics, and Samaan was accepted to Cal State Los Angeles, where she will major in chemistry.

“I am so proud of Juan and Kermina. The hard work, dedication and courage they have shown to learn a new language and give themselves an opportunity to achieve their dreams is nothing short of phenomenal,” said Nari Cho-Berenthal, an English learner teacher on special assignment. “From the beginning, they accepted the challenges and asked to go faster. I wish them the best in their future.”

Saucedo came to California as an unaccompanied minor. Since arriving, he has stayed with relatives, working a part-time job to support himself and contribute to household expenses.

“The biggest reason for my success is my family in Mexico. I love them and they’ve never stopped telling me to do my best,” Saucedo said. “I want to prove to everyone I can succeed. When I came to the U.S., many people told me I wasn’t going to make it. I want to prove them wrong.”

Quiet and shy when he first arrived to El Monte High as a sophomore, Saucedo has transformed into a passionate and proactive student, gaining strength and confidence with every class he completes, even as he has overcome personal and financial obstacles.

Samaan, whose primary language is Arabic, spoke no English when she arrived. As a freshman, Samaan surprised her ELD teachers by asking to skip the transitional ELD support class and jump up two levels to take a grade-level English class. Despite the risks, Samaan got A’s in both semesters.

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“As an immigrant who is far away from their family, I just want to make them proud,” said Samaan, who plans to become a pharmacist. “My greatest supporter is my mother. Whenever I feel down, she is always there to help me get back up on my feet and not give up.”

With a passion for learning languages, Samaan has learned not only English, but has also taken two years of Spanish at El Monte High.

“Juan and Kermina are a great example of what hard work and perseverance can accomplish and our entire community celebrates with them,” Superintendent Dr. Edward Zuniga said. “I am especially proud of the work done by our dedicated staff at El Monte High School, who supported these special young adults and put them on the path to success.”

PHOTO CAPTION:

051420_EMUHSD_NEWCOMERS: El Monte High School seniors Juan Saucedo and Kermina Samaan, both English learners who accelerated in their studies and language development, have each been accepted to four-year universities.

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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.