



## Press Release

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## Four Bell Gardens High Students Continue Stellar Academic Pursuits, Receive Scholarships

**MONTEBELLO** – In the midst of Advanced Placement testing and with graduation around the corner, four Bell Gardens High School students are keeping their eyes on the prize. College for these seniors means CalTech, University of Michigan, Haverford College, and UCLA – and among them is a Gates Millennium Scholar, a Dell Scholar and hundreds of thousands of dollars in scholarships.

**Erik Herrera**, Bell Gardens High School valedictorian and BGHS Drum Major, will find himself in Pasadena at California Institution of Technology in the fall. Erik aims to study mathematics and music theory – hoping to eventually earn a Ph.D. and enter a career in computer science, specifically data encryption, or become a math professor. He credits his teachers, staff and college counselor Tracy Brendzal for connecting him and his peers to existing opportunity and information – affirming his belief that a student’s environment isn’t a limiting factor in success. Erik, who boasts a 4.37 GPA, will receive a scholarship from the university that covers nearly all of his tuition.

**Ainslee Preciado** will continue her education at the University of California, Los Angeles as a one of 1,000 students across the nation selected as a prestigious Gates Millennium Scholar. As a recipient, all undergraduate and graduate school costs are covered, which is good news for Ainslee who hopes to enter law school after graduating from UCLA. Ainslee was inspired to enter the world of national security or to practice international law with the United Nations after attending the Yale Young Global Scholars program last summer. A singer, violinist and active member of her church youth group, Ainslee is poised to graduate with a 4.02 GPA. She is the second consecutive Gates Millennium Scholar from BGHS.

**Omar Morales** is attending the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor on a full-ride scholarship from the California Association of Latino Superintendents and Administrators. His decision to commit to the university came after his first visit to the campus in April – when Brendzal, principal Juan Herrera, Superintendent Susanna Contreras Smith, and the Montebello Unified School District teamed up to cover his travel expenses. Hoping to study aerospace engineering, Omar appreciates the advice and encouragement he received from Brendzal, English teacher Suzie Carter and science teacher Seok Yoon during his years at BGHS. Omar has a 4.23 GPA and has been active member of the cross country and track and field teams.

**Leslie Luqueno**, selected as one of 350 Dell Scholars in the country, is heading to Haverford College in Pennsylvania in the fall with an interest in political science. As a Dell Scholar, she’s awarded a \$20,000 scholarship, a laptop, textbook gift cards as well academic and psychological support throughout her academic career. Leslie is currently editor-in-chief of BGHS paper, the Lancer Scroll – hoping to one day work in government or as a broadcast journalist for a Spanish network. She thanks her government teacher Daniel Vasquez for encouraging her passion in and pursuit of liberal studies. Leslie has a 4.11 GPA.

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“These four Bell Gardens High students, along with their peers across the District, represent the high-quality education offered and received at Montebello Unified,” MUSD Superintendent Susanna Contreras Smith said. “On behalf of the District, we offer a very heart-felt congratulations and good luck to Erik, Ainslee, Omar and Leslie. To their teachers, administrators, staff and parents – thank you for all your efforts in providing our students with the knowledge, tenacity and encouragement to succeed.”

**Photo Captions**

MUSDBGHS1: From left to right: Omar Morales will attend the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor on a full-ride scholarship from the California Association of Latino Superintendents and Administrators; Leslie Luqueno, selected as one of 350 Dell Scholars in the country, is heading to Haverford College in Pennsylvania with an interest in political science; Ainslee Preciado will attend UCLA as a one of 1,000 students across the nation selected as a prestigious Gates Millennium Scholar; and BGHS valedictorian and drum major Erik Herrera will study math at the California Institution of Technology in Pasadena.

MUSDBGHS2: From left to right: Bell Gardens High School college counselor Tracy Brendzal, Omar Morales, Leslie Luqueno, Ainslee Preciado, Erik Herrera and BGHS Principal Juan Herrera pose in the midst of Advanced Placement testing.

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**Montebello Unified School District** is a dynamic learning institution employing top-quality educators. It is the combined work of many that allows the District to continue educating more than 30,000 students every year using the 40 Developmental Assets at all of our school sites. It is through everyone’s efforts – students, parents, teachers, staff and administrators – that we are achieving the District’s number one goal of raising student achievement. Learn more online at [www.montebello.k12.ca.us](http://www.montebello.k12.ca.us).