

## PRESS RELEASE

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## Inspirational College Program Receives Boost from L.A. County Supervisor Hilda Solis

**POMONA** – Recent Garey High School graduate Juan Ledesma returned to his alma mater Sept. 4 to speak to a room of college hopefuls about Bright Prospect, the college prep program that catapulted him to academic success and landed him a spot at UCLA.

Bright Prospect partners with Pomona Unified to empower high-potential, low-income high school students to gain admission to, succeed in and graduate from four-year universities. It has achieved a 91 percent college graduation rate by providing a comprehensive support system that continues throughout college.

“Bright Prospect has done so much for my life and the lives of so many others,” said Ledesma, who completed an internship at Pomona Unified and has worked with local lawmakers on policy matters. “It’s been an inspiration to me to pursue my dreams of becoming a lawyer, influencing my community and someday coming back to Pomona Unified to give back to those who have helped me.”

To bolster the work that Pomona students like Ledesma have benefited from, Los Angeles County Supervisor Hilda Solis donated \$7,500 to Bright Prospect, now in its 13<sup>th</sup> year, during a special ceremony in an Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) classroom at Garey High.

“I commend you, the administrators and leadership of this program. You are on your way to a better lifestyle, better career for yourself and family,” said Solis, who was told by her high school counselor that she wasn’t college material and was better suited to be a secretary.

Solis graduated from Cal Poly Pomona, served on the Rio Hondo College Board of Trustees and became the first Latina woman elected to the State Senate. She most recently served as the U.S. Secretary of Labor as part of President Barack Obama’s administration.

“The sky is the limit,” Solis said. “Don’t put any barriers in front of you.”

Pomona Unified leaders lauded Solis for being an inspiration to students and Bright Prospect for its efforts to boost college attendance and graduation rates.

“The work that Bright Prospect has done to help our students become college-bound and lifelong learners over the last decade is unparalleled,” said Board of Education President Andrew Wong. “Thanks

to programs like Bright Prospect, Pomona Unified is able to make these opportunities and resources accessible to any student who needs the extra support.”

Each student in the Bright Prospect program receives college readiness programming, one-on-one coaching, application assistance and ongoing mentoring from peers and professionals from 10<sup>th</sup> grade through college graduation.

The program is tailored for students ages 14 to 26 and serves more than 1,200 students from Pomona Unified four comprehensive high schools – Diamond Ranch, Ganeshia, Garey and Pomona – and three academies – Fremont, Palomares and Village Academy.

“I commend these young, smart students who believe in themselves, know they can make a difference in the world and are committed to returning to their community to help the next generation of students,” said PUSD Superintendent Richard Martinez. “It takes a village to help and support one another and I’m excited that there is such a collective effort among our partners, like Bright Prospect, to support college and career readiness.”

#### PHOTO CAPTIONS:

**BRIGHTPROSPECT1:** Los Angeles County Supervisor Hilda Solis presents a \$7,500 check to Bright Prospect, which serves high school students from Pomona Unified in their efforts to attend college. She is joined by Pomona Unified administration, Bright Prospect officials and alumni of the program.

**BRIGHTPROSPECT2:** Los Angeles County Supervisor Hilda Solis meets with Garey High School students following a check presentation ceremony on Sept. 4.

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