



## FALL 2015

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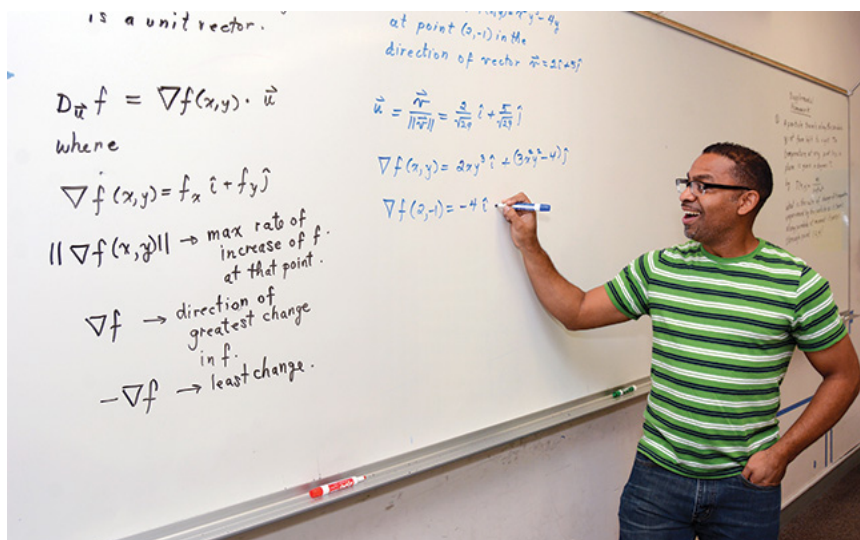
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# Nothing Mediocre About SMC's Scholars



In 1985, the Titanic was found, the plastic thingamajig that saves hot pizza from the top of the box was invented, and Santa Monica College became the first community college with a Transfer Alliance Program (TAP) with UCLA, guaranteeing SMC students priority admission if they met certain qualifications. TAP evolved

into SMC's Scholars Program.

Now, 30 years later, **SMC's Scholars Program is the most robust in the state, serving approximately 1,100 students each year.** The program offers a selection of rigorous classes, along with individual counseling and tutoring, to prepare students for transfer to four-year colleges and universities. Students in the program are guaranteed priority admission consideration to selected schools, including UCLA, UC Irvine, Loyola Marymount University (LMU), Chapman University, Mills College, and Occidental College. In fall 2013, more students were admitted to UCLA from SMC's Scholars Program than from any other California community college's TAP program.

"What sets this program apart from that of other colleges," says SMC Interim Executive Vice President Jeff Shimizu, "is that **we made a commitment that transferring students is our priority.**" Shimizu was the first counselor for the Scholars Program, helping its first group of 90 students in 1985. "From the beginning, our faculty supported the Scholars Program and set a strong standard that filtered through to other programs. We're not going to settle for mediocre," says Shimizu. "We're going to strive to be better and be the best at what we do."



Teresa Pitts, 52, had "a bumpy start with education." She didn't graduate with her high school class, and she dropped out of college twice. At 46, after the deaths of her beloved older brother and mom, Pitts came back to SMC, then transferred and graduated from UCLA with honors, an inspirational story covered by *Huffington Post* and *USA Today*.

*"I believe my success was*

*ensured the day I was accepted  
into the Scholars Program.”*

– Teresa Pitts, former SMC Scholar and UCLA  
graduate

Pitts was working full time when she came to SMC but was determined to see her education through. And the Scholars Program counselors were there for her all the way, starting with getting her through the panic of thinking she wouldn't be accepted into UCLA because of her past academic record.

“But Teresa (Garcia) fought for me,” says Pitts. Next stop for Pitts: law school. “I always say the Scholars Program ‘packages’ students,” says Counselor Teresa Garcia, who has been the program's leader for the last 14 years. “The students are ready—we just help them develop and show the potential they've already got.”

Andrea Jimenez, 21, is an SMC Scholar working toward an associate degree in public policy. “Being an undocumented immigrant meant financial aid was not available when I graduated from Santa Monica High School,” says Jimenez, “so I couldn't go to New York University or to UC Irvine, where I was accepted.” Instead, she came to SMC and joined the Scholars Program.

Today, Jimenez is also working full time and has already been accepted into UC Santa Barbara, but she's waiting to hear back from UCLA, her top choice. “In six years,” she says, “I see myself as a UCLA Law School graduate.”

Jariel Bytheway graduated cum laude from UCLA in 2009 with a political science, international relations degree, and was accepted directly into defense contractor Raytheon's prestigious Rotational Leadership Development Program. He now works with clients such as NASA as a Lead Contracts Negotiator for Raytheon.

Bytheway describes his life at SMC as “simply difficult.” After he was accepted into the Scholars Program, his

determination to succeed was noticed by the counselors, who helped guide him through the transfer process—twice! After a poor academic performance in his last semester, Bytheway’s initial acceptance to UCLA was rescinded.

“I was devastated,” says Bytheway. “For the first time in my life, I contemplated quitting.” But the Scholars Program counselors wouldn’t let that happen, helped him craft a plan to earn reinstatement to UCLA—and you already know the rest of his story.



How successful is the Scholars Program? Recent data from UCLA showed that students in the program had an application success rate of 90%, compared to about 35% for the general SMC student population.

And since SMC has held its spot as California’s top transfer institution for over 20 years, no one’s arguing. Click [here](#) to find out more about the Scholars Program.

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