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SUMMER 2016

Dreaming Big, Working Hard



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JASMINE GARCIA CREDITS FINANCIAL AID FOR HER ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Jasmine Garcia '17 has a big smile that never seems to leave her face. She's the first one in her family to go to college, and she's over the moon to be a Torero.

A math whiz, Garcia, an industrial engineering (IE) major, has worked hard to get here. She credits the financial assistance she receives — an annual \$10,000 Presidential Scholarship supplemented by financial aid and her 11-hour-a-week campus job — for making it all possible. And as a resident assistant, she receives free room and board.

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Without financial aid, she says, “I would not be here. I wouldn’t be able to live my dream. But I’m doing well. I’m surviving college.”

More than surviving, she’s thriving.

Garcia took five classes and two labs during the second semester of her junior year. She serves as the social chair for Theta Tau, a coed engineering fraternity that’s establishing a chapter at USD. And she supports USD TV and USD Radio by interviewing her favorite bands, shooting video and taking photos.

Garcia has always pushed herself academically. Born and raised in Green Bay, Wis., she excelled at math, taking high school algebra in seventh grade.

Her parents divorced when she was young, and at 14 she moved with her mother and younger brother to Murrieta, Calif., which had a great new high school and a terrific math teacher.

A good education for their kids was important to her parents, who never went to college. Garcia’s mother, who came to the United States from Mexico, met Garcia’s father in Soledad, a little town near Salinas, where he worked in the fields. He’s now a truck driver, and she works in human resources.

“I’ve seen the long hours my parents worked to provide for my family, and they’ve always told me that I didn’t have to live paycheck to paycheck if I worked hard in school,” Garcia says.

When it came time to choose a college, Garcia applied everywhere in San Diego — except for the University of San Diego. She didn’t know it existed and had never considered a private school, assuming it would be cost prohibitive. Only after a friend suggested that private schools might offer more scholarships did she send in an application.

The acceptance letters rolled in, but for Garcia, it really came down to UC San Diego and USD, which offered similar financial packages. The campus tour of USD, however, sealed the deal. Garcia loved how small the campus was, that all courses were taught by professors, and that it was close to everything — beaches, concerts, downtown San Diego.

“There was something about it where I could see myself here,” she says.

Garcia initially chose psychology as her major, but the Advanced Placement calculus courses she’d taken in high school meant she could enroll in Calculus 3 as an elective while a first-year student. An interest in coding prompted her to sign up for Programming 150, too. It turns out both of those courses were general electives for engineering students.

“My friends in study groups from my engineering classes looked at me and asked me, ‘Why aren’t you an engineering major?’”

'16

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In truth, she'd never considered it. During a long talk, Associate Dean Rick Olson suggested she study IE, which focuses on improving efficiencies of systems as a whole, such as manufacturing lines or facility layouts. Within a week, she'd switched majors.

Now, just a year away from graduation, she's looking forward to the day when she has her college degree in hand, because it will make her family proud ... not just her parents, but her many cousins, for whom she is a role model.

"It means the world to me to be able to earn a college degree. I know that's all my parents have ever wanted for me — to live an easier life than they ever had."

She recalls how much she loved showing her report cards to her parents when she was growing up. "It was a good feeling to make them proud. And it still is to this day." — *Bonnie Nicholls*

Watch a video of Jasmine.

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