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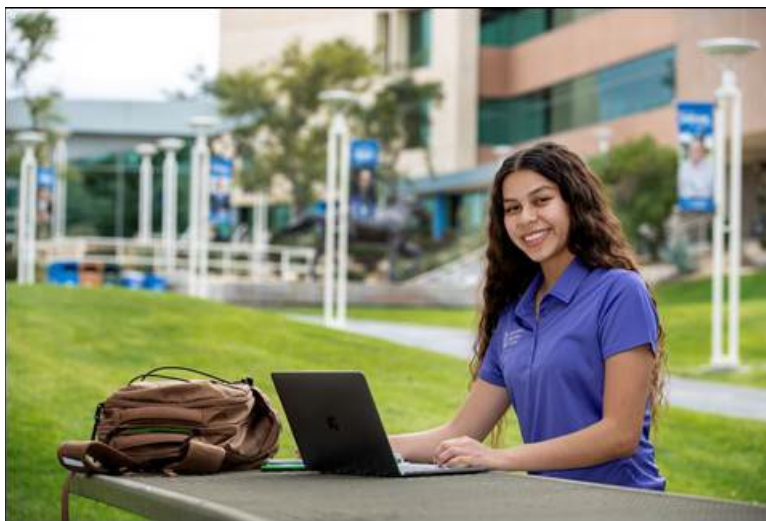
PRESS RELEASE

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CSUSB Palm Desert Campus student Juliana Garcia

College Corps program allows CSUSB Palm Desert Campus student to pay for college through volunteering in her community

PALM DESERT, Calif. – College students are extremely busy these days. That’s an understatement for CSUSB Palm Desert Campus junior Juliana Garcia, who uses a color-coded planner to keep track of all of her academic and volunteer activities.

Garcia, a first-generation college student from Cathedral City, is pursuing a bachelor’s degree in mathematics, with concentrations in teaching and business administration, and is a College Corps fellow at CSUSB.

[The #CalifornianForAll College Corps program](#) is a statewide, first-of-its-kind paid service and career development program, that provides meaningful work to college students in exchange for serving their community. The program helps participants graduate on time and with less debt while gaining valuable work experience.

Becoming a fellow requires completing 450 hours of service with College Corps. This translates into 10-15 hours per week for the academic year. CSUSB fellows must be enrolled as an undergraduate at the university and be able to provide documentation of resident status as a U.S. citizen, national or lawful permanent resident. AB 540 Dreamer students are also eligible if they meet the California Dream Act Service Incentive Grant (DSIG) Program eligibility.

Upon completion of the program, participants can earn a financial benefit valued up to \$10,000. Additional benefits include real-world job experience and skills to build their resumes, as well as access to training, networking and professional development opportunities. Building ties with the other fellows, while knowing that they are giving back to their communities, are some of the intangible benefits.

In the 2022-23 academic year, CSUSB was chosen as one of the first 45 partner campuses to take part in this distinctive program. This initiative integrates classroom learning with practical work opportunities, offering students both financial aid and professional growth. It actively involves students in significant community projects focused on education, climate change and food scarcity.

Through the College Corps program, Garcia blends her academic endeavors with a strong sense of social responsibility. She volunteers at Big Brothers and Big Sisters of the Desert (BBBS) where she is gaining valuable experience working with children. It's experience she says will assist her when she graduates this fall and becomes a mathematics teacher.

"I originally joined College Corps in hopes of learning more about being an educator and teaching from a strictly academic standpoint, but I have learned something much more valuable than that," said Garcia.

"Through Big Brothers Big Sisters, I have gotten to learn more about a student's psychological needs. This is something that I hadn't put much energy into prior because I got lost in the 'math' part of being a math teacher. Getting placed at BBBS was probably the best thing for me because it reminded me that a student's education is impacted by much more than their teacher's ability to explain a subject; students have issues at home that translate into their behavior at school or their ability to concentrate," she said.

"A huge part of being an educator that I almost ignored for the longest time is being able to understand student struggles while being patient and compassionate to them. Sometimes students need more emotional support than they do academic support," Garcia said. "I have learned to read students' emotions and feelings through their language and body movement. I have also gained more knowledge on how to communicate with students who are dealing with

different issues at home. These are huge for me because it will play an influential role in how I choose to run my classroom in the future. I hope that this will aid me in making a more equitable classroom for all students despite their varied psychological needs.”

Garcia has been volunteering since high school.

“My favorite aspect of volunteering is being able to see and feel the gratitude of those you supported,” she said. “Walking away from that moment knowing that you helped someone reach a better version of their life is extremely powerful. Sometimes the emotional connection you create with individuals is more impactful than the physical help you provide them. I love that when you volunteer, you are able to make an impact on your community by doing something as simple as creating a connection.”

Garcia is also the president of the PDC Soccer Club and employed by the Student Mentoring Program at CSUSB, where she mentors first-year and transfer students as they navigate their initial year at the university.

“The financial support that College Corps has provided me with has alleviated much of the financial burden of being a commuter student,” said Garcia. “The cost of transportation, meals and my education were quickly adding up, but College Corps has allowed me to continue accepting new opportunities without stressing over the financial burden. I am very grateful for all the financial support I have received, and I am proud to say that due to my efforts and programs like College Corps, I will be able to graduate debt free.”

CSUSB Palm Desert Campus takes pride in nurturing students like Garcia, who not only excel academically, but also embody the university's commitment to community engagement and social responsibility.

Cal State San Bernardino’s College Corps initiative, which is housed in the university’s Office of Pre-College Programs, recently received confirmation that they have been selected as a 2024-26 College Corps campus, which means that they will be able to continue to support eligible college students, including AB 540-eligible California Dream Act students, to serve their communities.

Visit the [CSUSB College Corps website](#) for more information about the program.

About PDC: The CSUSB Palm Desert Campus offers bachelor’s and master’s degrees, teaching credentials and certificates, and plays a vital role in educating the region’s growing population.

For more information about the CSUSB Palm Desert Campus, contact Mike Singer in the Office of Strategic Communication at msinger@csusb.edu or (760) 341-2883, ext. 78107, or visit the PDC website at www.csusb.edu/pdc.