



Adriana Rodriguez: One Student's Journey

By Caroline Sun

The opportunity to meet research scientists working in environmental science solidified Adriana Rodriguez's interest in pursuing a similar career. The recent Los Angeles Harbor College graduate was encouraged to present her work at a conference by her chemistry professor.

"It was a unique experience. It was really exciting because I met a lot of people there with a lot of different interests," Rodriguez said.

The Wilmington native will attend the University of California, Irvine in the fall. Although originally declared as an environmental engineering major, she's considering a switch to biomedical engineering.

"By the end of my first year taking biology, I learned about a vast amount of techniques and medical applications that can be done in a biology field, and I was hooked," Rodriguez said. "It was exactly what I wanted to be doing: learning and discovering new biological methods while ultimately helping others."

At the start of her college education, Rodriguez decided not to stray far from home due to financial issues. Harbor College enabled Rodriguez to pursue her passion for the environment and explore career paths as well.

While at Harbor, Rodriguez balanced her schoolwork with activities on-campus and in the community. She served as vice president of the Harbor Honors Transfer Club at LAHC, hosted three blood drives on-campus, and volunteered at Be the Match, a bone marrow organization, and School on Wheels, a program that gives school supplies to homeless children.

Rodriguez received her associate's degree in mathematics and enjoyed math so much, she served as a tutor for a Harbor math class and helped create study workshops for students falling behind in the class.

"I will definitely miss the accessibility and helpfulness and guidance from several departments, as well as the people. There is a close-knit community at Harbor that is welcoming and helpful."

At the San Pedro Boys and Girls Club, Rodriguez volunteered as a STEM coordinator teaching middle-school children a variety of scientific concepts in biology, chemistry, engineering, and robotics. Rodriguez developed her own curriculum and ensured the children left her class learning something new.

"Coming from similar socioeconomic backgrounds, growing up in the same surrounding impoverished areas, and being given very little opportunity at our disposal, working as the STEM coordinator made me realize how teaching the sciences provided essential opportunities for the elementary and middle school students."

Rodriguez says she faced some challenges along the way, finding the transition between high school and college tougher than she imagined. Upon entering Harbor, she thought she lacked the necessary study habits to help her succeed. She decided to surround herself with older students who were eager to transfer to a four year university. The group supported and encouraged each other to focus on their studies in order to transfer.

"I learned that it doesn't really matter where you come from or where you start, what matters is the journey and the path that you choose to take," Rodriguez said. ■

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