



NEWS

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Compton College Student Overcomes the Odds to Create Impressive Success Story

“It blows my mind that in just a few years, I’m a single mother who went from having no high school diploma, no job, no transportation, and no means to support my family to now having a job, graduating from community college, and transferring to a university this fall,” said Jessica Ramos, Compton College class of 2021 graduate and mother of two.

Ramos is graduating from Compton College this month with an associate degree and was accepted to California State University, Dominguez Hills to major in business administration. She is considering a career in human resources but will explore her career options while attending the university. “I still have a lot of things I want to accomplish and the first big step is transferring this fall to a university,” she said.

She was awarded two scholarships through the CalWORKs public assistance program: a \$250 scholarship through Compton College’s CalWORKs Office, and a \$500 CalWORKs [2021 Student Voices Scholarship](#) awarded by the CalWORKs Association Board. Only 23 California community college students in the CalWORKs program were awarded 2021 scholarships among those that applied.

As a single mother and domestic abuse survivor, Ramos has overcome the odds to earn her associate degree and continue her journey to achieve self-sufficiency through education. CalWORKs data shows that at least one in five college students is parenting a child, but only 8 percent of single moms earn a degree within six years. After dropping out of high school at age 15, Ramos tried to resume her education only to have it interrupted when she became a mom at a young age. She eventually earned a high school diploma from Paramount Adult School after her second child was born. “My marriage was full of abuse and manipulation brought on by my ex-husband’s drug and alcohol abuse,” she said. She finally broke free from the marriage, enduring a painful divorce. “I was going through a divorce, heartbreak, fear of losing my kids, depression, anxiety, and financial crisis.”

Realizing she needed to find a way to provide for herself and her kids, Ramos had heard about public assistance and available resources to help her get a college education to gain skills for employment. She also began to realize she needed access to mental health resources. She decided to go to the county public assistance office where she was enrolled in the GAIN program and referred to a variety of resources such as domestic violence counseling, individual therapy, and CalWORKs. In 2018, she enrolled at Compton College to begin her transformation through higher education.

Ramos displays an incredible attitude about the obstacles she has overcome. “For me, every single life experience I have encountered has led me to become the super mom I am; my superpower is resilience,” she said. More recently, her resilience was tested once again when the father of her children passed away, bringing up old emotions. But this time, Ramos knew what to do. “I reached out and asked for help, which is a difficult thing for people of my culture to do,” she said. I believe part of having the superpower of resilience is knowing

when to ask for help.” Compton College CalWORKs staff helped Ramos during this difficult time and assisted her in getting the care she needed. They referred her to counseling and helped her find a therapist she was comfortable with.

“I am a proud CalWORKs student; CalWORKs saved my life,” she said. The CalWORKs office at Compton College has helped Ramos in many ways and she considers the staff her second family. She credits the college’s CalWORKs staff with helping her learn everything about navigating college life and helping to keep her on track. She currently works for the Compton College CalWORKs Office as a student ambassador. She began working in the office in fall 2020, working the front desk, helping students register for workshops, setting up appointments, creating documents and flyers, and more. “Working in the office, I’ve grown so much and I am learning new skills,” she said. “I’m happy to have the chance to pay forward all that CalWORKs has done for me by helping other students.”

Ramos has also used many other student support services at Compton College to aid in her success, such as the Transfer Center for the university application process, academic counseling, the Library-Student Success Center as a quiet study space, and the state-funded Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS) and Cooperative Agencies Resources for Education (CARE) for extra financial and academic support. “The sense of community and respect on campus and seeing the same friendly faces every day is what I like best about Compton College,” said Ramos. “If I asked for help, it was always given to me.”

Ramos says she is now ready to tackle any challenges that come her way and what might be viewed as a negative for some is a positive for others. “I’m looking forward to my upcoming Compton College virtual commencement ceremony,” she said. For me, it will be better online because I will have my kids close during the virtual ceremony and I can intimately share that moment of celebration with them. At an in-person ceremony, they would not be sitting with me. I have learned you can always find the positive in all situations.”

Compton College CalWORKs information:

<http://www.compton.edu/student-services/support-services/calworkstanfgain/>

Photo available online:

http://www.compton.edu/admin-and-operations/community-relations/images/2021/Ramos_Jessica_2021.jpg

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About Compton College

Compton College is the community’s education solution offering a full complement of transfer and degree courses, as well as career and technical education. Students may earn an associate degree or certificate, transfer to a four-year university or train for a career. Compton College is located at 1111 E. Artesia Boulevard, Compton, CA 90221.