

UC San Diego Hispanic Scholarship Council hosts annual benefit honoring scholarship recipients

April 7, 2011

By Jade Griffin

In Joseph Ocampo's family, he is a bright, shining star. A sophomore at the University of California, San Diego, Ocampo is the first in his family to attend a four-year university and has great plans for making a difference in the world. Ocampo will be honored as one of UC San Diego's outstanding student "stars" at the 14th annual *Fiesta de las Estrellas* scholarship benefit hosted by the UC San Diego Hispanic Scholarship Council.



Since its founding, *Fiesta de las Estrellas*—translated “celebration of the stars”—has raised more than \$1 million for undergraduate scholarships, helping 70 students like Ocampo. As the university celebrates its 50th Anniversary, the event honors the extraordinary scholarship recipients who have benefited from the Hispanic Scholarship Council's philanthropic efforts and donations from sponsors like the Jack in the Box Foundation, which provides the funding for Ocampo's scholarship.

“As we celebrate our remarkable scholarship recipients, we are reminded that private support is more important than ever in light of the state's current economic crisis and the threat of additional budget cuts to the University of California,” said Chancellor Marye Anne Fox. “We thank the event sponsors, attendees and donors who are helping to ensure that UC San Diego retains its excellence, accessibility and affordability for students from all backgrounds.”

In addition to Ocampo, this year's scholarship recipients being honored as part of *Fiesta de las Estrellas* include Alejandra Calderas, Lucio Calderon, Victor Contreras, Eric Fonseca, Alex Fung, Nicole Garcia, Stephen Khuu, Darlene Lopez, Juan Luis Melendez, Margarita Orozco, Adam Ramirez, George Santellano, Sabrina Santilli, Rachel Torres and Yvette Yeager.

A psychology major, Ocampo attended The Preuss School UCSD, a middle and high school dedicated to providing intensive college-prep education for motivated low-income students who will become the first in their families to graduate from college. Upon graduation from Preuss, Ocampo—encouraged by supportive grandparents and funded with the Jack in the Box Fiesta Scholarship—began attending UC San Diego as an undergraduate.

“I wouldn't be at UC San Diego without scholarships,” said Ocampo. “There's also a social dimension to the scholarship support. It's nice knowing that there are people who believe that my future should depend on how hard I work, not my ability to pay.”

Ocampo is grateful for the support and services he has received at UC San Diego, which have

helped him succeed, even despite difficult circumstances. Ocampo comes from a low-income family that is no stranger to drug and alcohol problems. His family also has a history of mental disorders—including bipolar, schizophrenia and anxiety disorders. Ocampo was diagnosed with clinical depression several years ago.

“It shouldn’t be a surprise that young people from poor, disadvantaged families going through a lot of problems would develop this type of issue,” noted Ocampo. “I’ve been extremely successful, and although it’s difficult sometimes, I manage my problems. But I’m also one of the lucky ones who has access to all the services of this campus. Many people don’t have that.”

The psychology major is interested in human thought and opinion, as well as the environment and science. He is a member of the campus chapter of Engineers for a Sustainable World (ESW), which is developing a mobile solar-powered station to charge batteries in laptops, cell phones, campus electric utility vehicles and other devices on campus, with a grant from the national ESW organization and SunEdison.

Ocampo hopes to pursue a doctorate degree and combine his interdisciplinary interests to study how people learn about science and how their knowledge affects decision-making. Eventually, he hopes to make a positive impact by helping to educate the public about energy consumption and sustainability practices, as well as advising “green” companies on how to best market their products to the public.

The April 14 celebration will begin 6 p.m. at the International House Great Hall at UC San Diego. Tickets cost \$150, with proceeds benefiting undergraduate scholarships. Donations will count toward UC San Diego’s \$50 million scholarship and fellowship campaign, “Invent the Future.” Those interested in attending *Fiesta de las Estrellas* or becoming a sponsor may call (858) 822-1537. For more on the event and sponsorship opportunities, please visit www.ucsdfiesta.ucsd.edu.

Sponsors for the 2011 Fiesta de las Estrellas include the Jack in the Box Foundation; Union Bank; Barona Band of Mission Indians; Gen-Probe; Pérez & Wilson LLP; QUALCOMM; Dudek; Alberto Mendivil '98, M.D., and Jorun Sutton Mendivil; San Ysidro Health Center and UC San Diego Student Affairs.

Media Contact:

Jade Griffin, 858-855-5309, jadegriffin@ucsd.edu