



**Board of Trustees  
Transforming Lives  
Nominations**

**November 14, 2019  
1:30 p.m.**

**ATEC  
Hardin Community Room**

**Community College District No. 18  
7662 Chanute Street NE  
Moses Lake WA 98837**

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# Transforming Lives 2020 Nomination Criteria

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## Description

The ACT Transforming Lives Awards recognize current or former students whose lives have been transformed by attending a Washington state community or technical college. The ACT Awards Committee will select six keynote speakers from the nominations submitted by the Washington community and technical colleges.

All nominees will be invited to attend, at ACT's expense, the ACT Legislative Contact Conference (February 17, 2020), at the RL Hotel in Olympia), where they will be honored during the Transforming Lives Awards Dinner. Award winners will be the keynote speakers, and each recipient will receive a \$500 cash award from ACT.

Every nominee will have his or her story and picture included in an awards booklet that will be shared with legislators, the higher education community, and posted on the ACT website.

## Awards Criteria

Nominations must come from the student's board of trustees, based on the following criteria:

- The nominee may be:
  - a current or former Washington community or technical college student (**within 3 years of completing a degree, certificate or transfer**)
  - Or a current student who is making significant progress toward completing a degree or certificate that is helping him or her prepare for success in his or her future endeavors.
  
- The nominee must share in written format (**maximum 600 words**) about overcoming barriers to achieve higher education goals and how the education and support received at his/her community or technical college was life transforming. **The following questions must be answered in order for the nomination to be eligible for consideration:**
  - ✓ **What compelled you to attend a community or technical college? And most importantly was there an individual(s) or program at the college you feel contributed to your success?**
  - ✓ **What was it about that individual(s) or program that made the difference in transforming your life? Please explain.**
  - ✓ **Were there any barriers or obstacles that originally prevented you from attending a community or technical college?**
    - **If so, please identify those barriers or obstacles and tell us what you did to overcome those barriers or obstacles?**

- ✓ **What is next for you and what are your goals for your future?**
- ✓ **If you could share one piece of advice for other students or for those who are unsure about their ability to attend a community or technical college, what would that be?**

Each college may develop its own process for soliciting and selecting nominations. One student from each college may be nominated by the local board of trustees. Multi-campus districts provide one nominee from each college in the district.

**Nominations must include the completed nomination form, the student's statement, a letter of support from the board of trustees outlining why the student's story was selected, and a head and shoulder photograph (300 DPI or higher) of the student. Materials must be sent electronically. The student's statement (600 word maximum) must be in a Word document.**

### **Deadlines:**

**Nominations must be received by ACT by Friday, November 8, 2019 (extended to 11/15)**

ATTN: Linda Graham, [lgraham@sbctc.edu](mailto:lgraham@sbctc.edu)

**\*\*Previous nominations submitted within the last 3 years are eligible to be resubmitted and reconsidered\*\***

**(Students previously chosen as ACT's keynote speakers are not eligible)**

**Awardees will be notified mid-December.**

**\*\*Please note: all student stories and pictures will be published in the Transforming Lives Booklet. The booklet is widely distributed to Legislators, CTC Stakeholders and the Public. \*\***

**Big Bend Community College**  
**Transforming Lives Award Nominees**  
**Scoring Matrix**

<b>Nominee</b>	<b>Barriers</b>	<b>Accomplishments</b>	<b>Goals</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Laura Bautista Rodriguez</b>				
<b>Jennifer Dominguez</b>				
<b>Aylin Durañ Torralba</b>				
<b>Shalon Gough</b>				
<b>Juan Martinez Araujo</b>				
<b>Abraham Tapia</b>				

## **Laura Bautista Rodriguez 2019 BBCC Graduate**

I am a home health registered nurse and if someone would have told me ten years ago this would be my future, I would have not have believed it.

During high school, I became involved with TRiO Upward Bound at BBCC. Prior to that, I had no aspirations for higher education because no one in my family had attended college, let alone graduated high school. With TRiO's support, I participated in Running Start even though it took me two tries before placing into college level classes. I still remember my first day as a college student and Sue Workman, from TRiO, walked me to the library to help set up my BBCC email account. It was then when I realized I had someone who truly believed in my potential. Sue continued to support my dreams throughout my BBCC journey.

Fast-forward two years, I graduated from Royal High School, obtained an Associate's degree and transferred to the University of Washington. The first time I ever stepped foot on a college campus was with TRiO Upward Bound. Initially I wanted to attend medical school but unfortunately, I struggled in the sciences and failed a couple of classes. I began to feel defeated so I changed my major and earned a Bachelor's degree in Public Health. After graduating, I accepted a job at the Moses Lake Community Health Center and after almost six months of working, I knew I had to do more. That is when I decided to return to BBCC to continue my education.

I had a few courses that if completed successfully I would be able to apply to BBCC's nursing program. Most of those courses were taught by Barbara Jacobs. She was a great instructor who was always willing to answer all my questions. I would rush from my 8-5pm job to catch her before she left home so she could unlock the lab in order for me to study the skeleton models. Then fast-forward one year; I was accepted into the nursing program but had one major obstacle: money. At that point, I no longer qualified for financial aid and my savings were depleted from paying out of pocket for my science courses. During one of my study sessions, Jody Bortz, from Career Services, overheard my financial concern and encouraged me to seek assistance from the Opportunity Grant. I applied but was denied because I already had a Bachelor's degree. When Jody learned that I didn't qualify for the help, she personally went with me to go talk to the staff in Workforce Education Services. There was another program called BFET, which I actually qualified under due to my unemployment and had it not been for Jody's willingness to help me, nursing school would have been put on hold. With hard work and dedication, I finished the BBCC nursing program, passed the NCLEX on the first try, and had a job lined up.

Every person from BBCC came into my life at exactly the perfect time. And there are still many other people that contributed to my success. That is the beauty of a smaller campus and smaller classroom settings. Not only has my life been transformed, but now my daughter's life will be too. Looking forward in the next 5-10 years, I plan to return to school to become a nurse practitioner with the goal of working for Columbia Basin Health Association given its high demand for qualified Spanish speaking providers. My advice to others would be, take a leap of faith and do not let fear interfere with the potential of success.



# Big Bend

COMMUNITY COLLEGE

*Transforming lives through excellence in teaching & learning*

TRIO UPWARD BOUND

October 16, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

It is my pleasure to nominate Laura Bautista Rodriguez for a 2020 Transforming Lives Award. Laura was an active member in the BBCC TRiO Upward Bound program throughout high school. This is a federally funded college readiness program that provides academic support, college preparation, career awareness, and other support services to low-income and/or potential first-generation college students.

Laura is a 2011 graduate of Royal High School and a two-time graduate of Big Bend Community College. She earned an AAS transfer degree at the same time she graduated from high school through her participation in Running Start and went on to earn a Bachelor's degree in Public Health from the University of Seattle in 2015. In 2017, Laura was accepted into the BBCC nursing program and this year successfully earned her credentials as a registered nurse.

Now let me share some of Laura's background and how she overcame numerous barriers to achieving educational success. She is one of five children and is the second to the youngest; she was the first person in her family to graduate from high school and the only one to earn a Bachelor's degree. Her parents came to the U.S. from Mexico and settled in Royal City where they were orchard workers. Even though Laura lived with both parents, it often felt like she had only one parent, her mother. Laura's dad was an alcoholic and did not provide for the family financially so they never had secure housing. Most of the time, the family lived with Laura's older sister because they couldn't afford rent.

Laura was a shy and reserved student when she first began participating in TRiO during her sophomore year. She lacked the self-confidence and vision to see herself succeeding beyond high school since she didn't have anyone's footsteps to follow. Slowly, she began to dream and envision herself earning scholarships, attending college, and having a career in healthcare after visiting a college campus and hearing success stories from TRiO graduates. For once, she could see that it was possible to pursue a college degree even though she lacked the resources at home. During her junior year, TRiO recommended her to the UW U-DOC program, which is a summer healthcare internship. Laura was finally starting to see her potential and her unlimited opportunities. With hard work and dedication, upon high school graduation she earned the national Dell Scholarship worth \$20,000 and Costco Diversity Scholarship worth \$40,000 to name a few.

Laura wanted to work in healthcare and was taking the prerequisites needed for medical school. She felt like a failure when the coursework became too rigorous and she lacked the proper study skills at that time to move forward. Thankfully, she didn't give up and rewrote a different educational plan that included public health. After completing one of her major goals of earning a Bachelor's degree, she moved back home to work in a local clinic. She soon realized that she wanted to achieve more so she could work directly with patients in a medical setting. Laura sought out the college where everything started for her and began taking the nursing prerequisites at BBCC. A year later, she was accepted into its competitive program

and began working as a LPN. During partway through her second year, she found out that was pregnant and hoped that she would finish the program. Thankfully, her pregnancy went well and she was able to successfully graduate from the BBCC Nursing program in June 2019. She is expecting her first child in early November.

Laura is currently working part-time as a registered nurse for Assured Home Health and conducts home visits throughout Grant County. She takes pride in her Spanish speaking skills and the ability to help patients that don't speak English. She loves her job and no longer has to worry about where she is going to live. She has her own apartment, is self-sufficient, and has the means to raise her daughter. Laura attributes her success to the people and programs at BBCC that helped her achieve her goals and dreams beginning in high school.

I am proud to say that Laura's younger sister followed in her footsteps by joining BBCC's TRiO Upward Bound program and participating in Running Start. She too earned an AAS transfer degree and attended a university. When one student's life is positively impacted at BBCC, it usually has a positive ripple effect on the people around them and this story is a testament to this belief.

I couldn't be more proud of this young lady and cannot wait to recognize her as a Transforming Lives Award Nominee. She deserves this recognition and honor for her perseverance, sacrifice, and dedication to achieving her goals.

Sincerely,



Anita De Leon, MSW  
TRiO Upward Bound Director

## **Jennifer Dominguez Current BBCC Student**

It's 3:00 a.m. and I hear my parents rustling in the kitchen getting ready for work. This means I can sleep four more hours until it's time to awaken my siblings and get them ready for school. 7:00 a.m., "time for school" I say. Everyone must be dressed and have breakfast before we head out. After school, it's time for me to cook dinner and help everyone with their homework. At 6:00 p.m. my parents return exhausted yet with bright smiles on their faces. After 9:00 p.m. once everyone's in bed, it's my time to do homework and study. This was my typical week, beginning at the age of eleven. At a young age, I saw my parents work hard to provide us with opportunities. I learned about responsibility and having to step up especially as the eldest.

Education was a priority in my household, and my parents dreamed of me graduating high school since they never had the opportunity. Yet, being a first-generation student was a challenge because although I wanted to earn a postsecondary education, I had no idea what college was, how I was supposed to choose a career or pay for expenses, etc. All I knew was that I had to attend college not only for myself, but also for my family. My greatest obstacle was my lack of knowledge about college; I didn't have anyone to look up to or to ask for help. Luckily, my freshman year in high school I learned about a program that changed my life completely.

TRiO Upward Bound came into my life when I needed it most. At the time I signed up, I didn't know what it was really all about, but I knew that they had cool field trips and that they could help me get to college. Shortly after being accepted, I realized that it was so much more than that. There is no doubt that without this program, I would not be where I am today. This program guided me through my years in high school, they were literally my second family. They helped me choose my classes, get set up with job-shadows, internships and scholarships, etc. It is definitely a life-changing program that presented me with endless opportunities that made me who I am today. They helped me grow by challenging me and believing in me when I doubted myself. With the people of this program, I have shared tears during times of distress but also many laughs and joy during the moments of success. They stood right next to me during the most important times of my life and helped me plan my future. The heart of this program is huge and their strong passion for helping students succeed is unexplainable. Thanks to this program and their continuous support and help, I reached one of my biggest life goals, which was to pursue a career in the nursing field.

My next step is to graduate from the BBCC nursing program in spring of 2020. I have a strong passion for helping my community and therefore I want to work in a rural hospital nearby. My plan is to work part-time so that I can also earn my bachelor's in nursing. I am grateful for all the opportunities that BBCC has offered me and excited to see what my future holds.

**My advice for students:** Success is not easy. Work hard, ask for help, do anything it takes to get to the point where you've always imagined yourself.





# Big Bend

## COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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TRIO UPWARD BOUND

October 24, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

It is my pleasure to nominate Jennifer Dominguez for a 2020 Transforming Lives Award. Jennifer was an active member in the BBCC TRiO Upward Bound program throughout high school. This is a federally funded college readiness program that provides academic support, college preparation, career awareness, and other support services to low-income and/or potential first-generation college students.

Jennifer is a 2017 graduate of Warden High School and Big Bend Community College. She earned an AAS transfer degree at the same time she graduated from high school through her participation in Running Start. During spring quarter in 2017, she became a certified nursing assistant and began working in the healthcare field. Her passion for nursing was affirmed through that experience so she decided to continue her studies at Eastern Washington University as a pre-nursing student. Despite getting homesick, Jennifer successfully completed the year with a 3.77 GPA. Even though her GPA was high, she wasn't accepted into EWU's nursing program. The good news is that she applied to the BBCC Nursing program as well and was accepted! Jennifer is now in her 2nd year as a nursing student and is on track to finish the program in June 2020.

Jennifer is the eldest of four children and was raised by both of her parents who are immigrants from Mexico. She spent the majority of her childhood being a second parent to her siblings due to her parents schedule as dairy workers. They would get up at 2:30 am every morning to leave the house by 3:00 am. This meant that Jennifer was responsible for waking up her siblings, making them breakfast, and assuring that everyone made it to school and to daycare on time. Jennifer was responsible for helping her parents interpret the bills and mail that would come in and speak for them at restaurants, doctor's appointments, and in school meetings. Every day, Jennifer made fresh corn tortillas and cooked dinner so her parents wouldn't have to worry about preparing a meal when they arrived home. Since her parents would go to sleep at 7:30 pm, she was responsible for helping with homework, bath time, and preparing her siblings for bed. After everyone was sound asleep, Jennifer would get out her own books and begin doing homework and studying. This was her daily routine since her parents only received one day off per week. To date, her parents still work the same schedule at the dairy farm.

Jennifer was a quiet and reserved student when she joined TRiO Upward Bound in high school. She was committed to her education and open to receiving guidance. She actually longed for the support probably because she was always so busy helping others at home that she was put on the back burner at times. With reservation, she fulfilled her commitment of attending TRiO's six-week residential summer academy on the BBCC campus. This was her first time living away from home. Slowly, Jennifer began to come out of her shell, and enjoy the academic and social experience.

Jennifer continued to excel in our program and in high school. She graduated in the top of her class and was ranked #3. She figured out ways to join leadership roles and had to get creative with her running start schedule to make sure she had time to drop off her baby sister at daycare and have enough time to pick her up by 3 pm. She attended leadership meetings during her lunch hour and somehow figured out a way to be a well-rounded student despite the schedule restrictions.

I truly admire her strength to push herself forward everyday even though she was often tired and overwhelmed. She preserved and never gave up even when things didn't exactly go her way. Jennifer gained a strong work ethic from the leadership role she held in her home at a young age. She also learned this trait by seeing her parents work hard every day without complaint. By her example, her brother, the second oldest child, also joined TRiO Upward Bound and graduated from BBCC with an AAS degree this past June. This is a testament that her sacrifices and positive example, paved the way for her sibling to pursue a college degree.

Jennifer is well on her way of achieving her educational goal of becoming a registered nurse. Her long-term goal is to become a nurse practitioner and to work in a local clinic or hospital so she can be a role model and serve the Hispanic community. She deserves to be recognized and honored as a Transforming Lives Award recipient.

Sincerely,



Anita De Leon, MSW  
TRiO Upward Bound Director

## **Aylin Duran-Torralba Current BBCC Student**

My parents are migrant workers who moved to the United States to improve our family's quality of life. Seeing my parents come out from working in the orchards exhausted and in physical pain from wearing heavy bags of fruit, has helped me recognize the value of hard work. Witnessing them working labor intensive jobs, has compelled and motivated me to strive for a better future, namely getting an education. When I was just an infant, my two-year old brother became ill. Although the doctors assured us that he was fine, my brother's symptoms became worse. When he died, the doctors confirmed he had a heart attack. More recently, my father was diagnosed with malignant brain cancer- a disease which he is still fighting today. Although I have faced tremendous hardships, these have fueled my ambitions to be the first in my family to earn a college degree, be financially stable, and eventually becoming a nurse. Through my parent's inspiration, my hard work, and my drive to improve our lives and provide financial security, nothing gives me greater joy than to earn a college education and make them proud.

My family's financial insecurity has not only impacted my home life, but my academics too. Both of my parents depended on seasonal farm work. This caused many interruptions in attendance throughout the school year-causing me to fall behind academically and socially. I knew that I couldn't do it alone. In Othello High School, I joined AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) to support me and help plan for college. In my two years at Big Bend, I have participated in TRiO SSS to provide me support in my academic planning. I have even recently started working as an Office Clerk there! I am highly involved in STEM Peer-Mentoring which helps to keep me on track and provide valuable resources for continuing my goal towards a healthcare profession. It's with mentoring that I learned about Summer Health Professions Education Program (SHPEP). I was accepted to University of Washington's session last summer, which was an incredible opportunity to strengthen my academic skills, gain exposure to different areas of medicine, and develop what it takes to get into nursing school.

My life has not been easy. Although I am still living in difficult circumstances, my experiences help define who I am and what I want to do with my life, nursing. Now, I am on pace to complete my AAS-Pre-Nursing DTA at Big Bend Community College. After Big Bend, I plan on completing a Bachelor's of Science in Nursing at Washington State University. Witnessing healthcare shortages in my community and experiencing family health tragedies has inspired my goal of providing high-quality, compassionate care in my rural community. I want to use my community college education to improve health care to the underserved and make my Othello community a healthier place. I have developed a passion for becoming a nurse, namely because it is "my story," and a way I can fill the void in my heart from my brother's death and make a difference in societies, communities, and families.

The advice that I would give to future students who are unsure to attend a community college would be: Even though times get rough and you just want to quit, you should keep on pushing through to move forward and do the best for your future. Times may be very unpleasant and out of the norm, but you will learn how to adapt and overcome challenges that are hard in the moment.



# *Big Bend*

COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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TRANSFORMING STEM PATHWAYS

October 22, 2019

Dear Big Bend Community College Board of Trustees,

It is my pleasure recommending Ms. Aylin Duran-Torralba for the Transforming Lives Award at Big Bend Community College (BBCC). Ms. Duran-Torralba has been a rising leader in STEM Peer-Mentoring, a program that I coordinate, for two years now. This has given me an opportunity to become well-acquainted with her high-quality of work, capacity to excel in challenging times, and robust determination to improve healthcare services in underserved communities. Throughout this time, I have been highly impressed with Ms. Duran-Torralba's relentless commitment to immerse herself in health and research-related opportunities as she pursues her goal of becoming a nurse.

Ms. Duran-Torralba continuously deepens her knowledge and curiosity. She works hard not only in her courses, but strengthens her skillset by engaging in science and health-focused extracurricular activities including volunteering at Samaritan Hospital, public service, and most notably as a Program Intern with University of Washington's Summer Health Professions Education Program in summer 2019. This program honed Ms. Duran-Torralba's academic and research practice through an intensive focus on biology, organic chemistry, biostatistics, and public health.

Ms. Duran-Torralba uses Big Bend's services to guide and support her academic goals. To strengthen her academic success and build transfer readiness, she is highly involved in STEM Peer-Mentoring. Ms. Duran-Torralba actively engages with TRiO SSS, and will even begin working in their office to help other students soon. She is highly resourceful, demonstrated through her consistent use of the STEM Center, eTutoring, supplemental instruction, and the Writing Center.

It has been my pleasure working with Ms. Duran-Torralba. While her education at BBCC is unlocking opportunities for her future, her desire to share that personal transformation with her family and community is what makes her exceptional. She is a budding change leader, preparing for a career focused on improving health services for our Latinx and low-income community. Her utilization of academic and campus resources to transform her life makes Ms. Duran-Torralba an excellent candidate for the Transforming Lives Award. I am happy to provide any additional information that would help to advocate for Ms. Duran-Torralba. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Anne Ghinazzi  
STEM Advising Specialist

## Shalon Gough Current BBCC Student

Attending Big Bend Community College was an easy decision for me considering it is close to family as well as having the reputation for an outstanding Nursing program. I chose to enroll in spring 2018 a few days after the quarter started, I was able to meet with the pre-nursing advisor, Jen Deleon, and get started right away in the CNA course. Getting started immediately was helpful, going back to school at nearly 30 years old is daunting, I was able to jump in with both feet and not look back. The true transformation for me began after completing summer quarter in 2018 and beginning fall quarter, I had received a 4.0 in my beginning classes and wanted to strive to continue that but was unsure of my abilities since I was starting my first chemistry class ever! Luckily I was enrolled in a course with Sarah Bauer, she was motivating and encouraging as an instructor and I did receive that 4.0 as well as continue on to her into organic chemistry. Realizing I'm able to achieve the grade I desire has opened so many doors for myself, I've joined PTK and met so many great students who quickly became friends, as well as classmates I'm on the same science track with. You don't imagine when you start back to college so late in life that you'd be making so many new and close friends.

Before I started back to college I was a part time massage therapist and had been in that career since I was 19 years old, I also had a family including three children. Working and having children would make it nearly impossible for me to attend college, more so due to the fact that my youngest son, Joshua, was diagnosed with a terminal form of epilepsy when he was six weeks old. Our family was lucky to have been blessed with 22 months with Joshua before he passed away in February 2018. Returning to work and life a few weeks after his death was impossible for me, I needed a change, I needed to help others who were in a similar situation. The nurses who cared for Joshua on our many trips to Seattle Children's and the Hospice nurses who cared for him while we were home changed our lives and I don't know how I would've survived Joshua's life and his death without them. That was push for me to return to school for nursing, my hope is to change someone's life like mine was changed by those around me.

This quarter I'm tackling a full course load with A&P, Microbiology, and Psychology 200 so my immediate goal is to excel in these courses. I will finish my pre-requisites for nursing winter quarter and plan on getting into the RN program at Big Bend. Big overall picture, I'll continue to get my BSN and specialize in pediatrics, including hospice and palliative care. My advice to other students thinking about starting at a community college is to just start. Don't overthink it, make friends with instructors and other students, they will become your life support. I'd end with don't doubt yourself as a student, if you have a growth mindset it's entirely possible to not only pass your classes but pass them at the top of the class.



# *Big Bend*

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October 9, 2019

To whom it may concern,

I am writing this recommendation for Shalon Gough, a student I was fortunate to work with last year when she took my introductory chemistry course and then my introduction to organic chemistry and biochemistry course here at Big Bend Community College. One of the many benefits of teaching a lab-course is the extra time it affords with students to get to know them academically and personally.

Shalon stood out to me as a student in both of the challenging courses that she took from me. She excelled in the class, often receiving the highest score on unit exams and finals, due to her intense motivation, hard work, and grit. She coordinated study sessions with peers, attended SI sessions and office hours, and attacked the course content with the intent to master it, not just "get an A." I wish more of my students displayed the level of effort and commitment to lifelong learning that I witnessed with her. She was also pleasant to teach! She'd find funny memes that related to the content and share them with myself and the class. I still use several of them in the lectures today. She was a delight and I wish I taught more classes that she needed for her pursuits.

In addition to all this, and unbeknownst to me at the time, Shalon was walking with amazing grace, mourning the loss of her young son not even a year earlier at that time. When I learned this, I was even more amazed by her as a person. I have since been humbled to realize what pain she has experienced and how she has turned that immense loss into her current action. She is returning to school and pursuing nursing, specifically with the intent of being a pediatric hospice nurse; so that she can be there for others experiencing similar loss. Her previously described drive and motivation become clearer and all the more precious when viewed through this lens.

My experience with Shalon shows that she is incredibly capable and hardworking. I have no doubt in my mind that she will achieve her dream of becoming a truly phenomenal hospice nurse. The families impacted by her care will be blessed during their own dark time to have her. Therefore I very strongly and without hesitation recommend her for your consideration for the Transforming Lives Award. Please feel free to contact me with any additional questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Sarah Bauer  
Big Bend Community College  
P: 509-793-2151  
E: sarahb@bigbend.edu

Juan Martinez Araujo 2018 BBCC Graduate

The main reason I decided to attend a community college was that I wanted to prepare myself for a university. Warden High School did not offer many college-prep courses and I wanted a challenge. I heard about the Running Start program and felt like it was exactly what I was looking for. It allowed me to start taking college courses that would prepare me for university-level classes while still meeting high school graduation requirements. Another program that helped me a lot was TRiO Upward Bound. TRiO Upward Bound helped me navigate my way through college.

The main reason I think the Running Start program helped transform my life was that I was able to prove I had what it took to get into a good engineering school. Coming from a small high school, there were not any advanced courses I could take to indicate to universities that I would be a good addition to one of their engineering programs. However, since I was able to do the Running Start program, I was able to complete the whole calculus and engineering physics series and two computer science classes by the time I graduated high school. I believe my time at Big Bend Community College greatly helped me get into the computer engineering program at the University of Washington. TRiO Upward Bound made a big difference because they helped me figure out everything I needed to know relating to college. They would help me fill out forms, applications, and connecting me with resources on campus.

One barrier I had to overcome was being a first-generation college student. Since my parents never went to college, they were just as clueless as I was when it came to applying to college. Luckily, I became a part of TRiO Upward Bound as a freshman in high school and I received the help I needed to apply to Big Bend and then the University of Washington. Another barrier I had to overcome was coming from a low-income family. I knew my parents would not be able to help me pay for college, so I had to figure out a way to do it without their assistance. One thing I did to help overcome this was to attend a community college to reduce the total cost of getting a bachelor's degree. Another thing I have been doing is working during the summers and applying for scholarships to reduce the number of loans I must take out.

Now, I plan to earn my bachelor's in computer engineering in June 2021. I am also exploring the possibility of getting a minor in math as well. After I graduate, I want to go to graduate school at UW or EWU. I plan to get my masters in either computer science or engineering and then go into the workforce.

If I could share one piece of advice with other students or for those who are unsure about their ability to attend a community or technical college, it would be, to give it their all. Yes, there will be a lot of struggling along the way, but going to a community or technical college opens many doors. For some, like myself, it prepared me and helped me get into a university and for others, it could be a pathway to a career they will enjoy.



# Big Bend

## COMMUNITY COLLEGE

*Transforming lives through excellence in teaching & learning*

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TRIO UPWARD BOUND

October 15, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

It is my pleasure to nominate Juan Martinez Araujo for a 2020 Transforming Lives Award. I met Juan through his participation in the BBCC TRiO Upward Bound program. This is a federally funded college readiness program that provides academic support, college preparation, career awareness, and other support services to low-income and/or potential first-generation college students.

Juan is a 2018 graduate of Warden High School and Big Bend Community College through his participation in Running Start. Juan has been an active participant in the TRiO Upward Bound program since the 9th grade. He participated in Upward Bound's after-school program and attended the six-week residential summer academy in 2015 & 2016.

Juan is one of the brightest students I have worked with in my 20 years of experience in Upward Bound. He graduated top of his class and earned a 4.0 GPA at BBCC while taking rigorous courses such as the Calculus Series and Engineering Physics. He earned the Outstanding Student Award in Physics and when I spoke to his former instructor Mr. Hamm, he said, "Juan is one of the brightest and most capable students I have ever worked with in my career". Juan's work ethic and study habits were excellent and noteworthy. He would study in our TRiO conference room using the whiteboard to write out his complex math formulas on a daily basis. He had a study partner who was also in TRiO and they would study six-days per week from 8 pm-midnight; Sundays were their only days off. During his first year at BBCC, he worked as a Supplemental Instruction Tutor in Pre-Calculus. He also began serving as a STEM Peer Mentor in 2018 and continues in this role presently.

Juan comes from a Mexican background and has been the backbone in his family as one of the eldest children. His father speaks very little English and his mom only Spanish. Neither of his parents continued their education past the 6th grade and weren't able to provide him with educational guidance or academic support. His father works at a ranch and his mom in seasonal agricultural jobs so money was always of concern. During the past few summers, Juan has worked as a scale operator, corn inspector, and as a sanitation worker for local factories to help his family. He was also employed during the TRiO Summer Academy 2018 as a math tutor.

Juan has three brothers, one who is older and two that are younger. One of his younger brothers has autism. His brother's diagnosis wasn't easy for his parents because of the language barrier and not fully being aware of resources. Juan stepped in and helped with interpreting and translating not just to advocate for his brother but to assist with paying bills and other communication needs. Often times, Juan had to care for his siblings due to his parents long work shifts. For example, he would take his brothers to school, pick them up, and provide care for them sometimes as late as 8 pm.

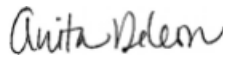


During his freshman year in high school, one of his brothers was 4 years old and the other 3 months old and they required a lot of attention. Despite these home responsibilities, Juan was still able to balance his schoolwork and excel.

Juan is currently in his second year at the University of Washington and pursuing a computer engineering degree. He has been accepted into this major and expects to graduate in June 2021. I have no doubt that he will achieve his educational and career goals because he is a hard-working and driven student. Although Juan is one of the most reserved students I've ever met his actions speak loud and clear about his work ethic and character. I truly believe that his participation in BBCC's TRiO Upward Bound program, STEM program, and math & science classes have given him the confidence, guidance, and support to reach his goals.

It is been an honor working with Juan and he deserves recognition for his academic excellence and role model behavior.

Sincerely,



Anita De Leon, MSW  
TRiO Upward Bound Director

## Abraham Tapia 2017 BBCC Graduate

My name is Abraham Tapia, I'm a recent graduate from Eastern Washington University with a major in criminal justice. There have been many reasons, factors, and challenges in getting my degree. While not all of these aspects were positive, I believe that they led me to where I am today. I've grown up in Eastern Washington my whole life and going to Big Bend made it easy to pursue higher education. I'm proud to say that I am the first in my family to have a university degree.

Growing up with a mother who raised me all on her own was definitely a motivation in how hard I worked. She supported me throughout all of my education and always pushed me to do better and go above the standard. I have a big family with five brothers in total and for someone to raise kids on their own, let alone five, I have no idea how my mom was able to do that. What I can say though is that she did a very good job and I'm happy and content with the decisions I have made thus far in my educational and professional career.

Recently, I secured a job as a crime victim advocate and I have found that this job is a career that I can see myself doing for a long time. Big Bend was where I first started studying criminal justice and they made it very easy to enroll for classes while in high school due to running start. The financial benefit of doing running start helped me to pay for my first two years of my college education. I didn't grow up in a wealthy family so the potential financial burden of having to pay tuition was lifted off my shoulders.

While at Big Bend, I participated in Trio Upward Bound and attended their summer academy. Having an advisor to guide me through my college career was so beneficial to my educational success. Another benefit about Upward Bound is their summer academy hosted at Big Bend. It was a good wake up call to what college life would be like living away from home for several weeks.

After receiving my Associates degree at BBCC, transferring to Eastern Washington was a great option for me because I was able to get right into the criminal justice program. Not having anyone to guide me for advice on my decisions was a major barrier. Luckily, I was able to get involved with Trio and they were able to help me understand what to expect in trying to go to college. Nobody in my family knew how to apply for college or financial aid so that was something I had no clue where to start. Thankfully with all of the help and guidance I received from Trio Upward Bound advisors and other college staff, I am well prepared to teach my younger siblings how to go through the process. More importantly, I want to let my friends or siblings know that there is plenty of support in college! I always felt that my advisors and family had my best interest in mind and having people who believe in you is like nothing else. How would I have accomplished what I have without my great support system and everyone who has helped me? Luckily, I am optimistic for the future in that my mind is open to continuing my education to an even higher degree. After all, I have one life to live and plenty of time to make those decisions!



# Big Bend

## COMMUNITY COLLEGE

*Transforming lives through excellence in teaching & learning*

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TRIO UPWARD BOUND

October 15, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

It is my pleasure to nominate Abraham Tapia for a 2020 Transforming Lives Award. I met Abraham through his participation in the BBCC TRiO Upward Bound program. This is a federally funded college readiness program that provides academic support, college preparation, career awareness, and other support services to low-income and/or potential first-generation college students.

I am extremely proud of Abraham for working hard towards his educational and professional goals and for seeing the light at the end of the tunnel even when faced with family hardships.

Abraham is a 2017 graduate of Moses Lake High School and Big Bend Community College through his participation in Running Start. This past June, he became the first in his family to earn a Bachelor's degree from Eastern Washington University with a Criminal Justice major and Spanish minor and is currently employed as a full-time Legal & Community Advocate at New Hope serving Grant & Adams Counties.

The odds were against Abraham achieving educational success as a low-income and first-generation male Hispanic student. Both of his parents were born in Mexico and had a limited education so the only work they could obtain in the U.S. was agricultural fieldwork. He was the middle child of six boys but tragically lost one of his older brothers at a young age while the family was living in California. It was at that time that his family decided to move to Washington State for a new start and lived in various places such as Mesa, Connell, and Warden before settling down in Moses Lake. Unfortunately, when Abraham was in elementary school, his father was deported back to Mexico, and soon after his mother divorced him due to domestic violence. A year later, his mother remarried and he gained a step-father and a younger step-brother. During all of that change, he still kept in contact with his biological father and even visited him several times in Mexico however, in 2010, he learned that his father had gone missing and was presumed dead. To date, it's still an unsolved case and mystery.

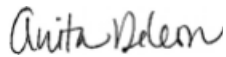
As you can see, this young student has been through a life filled with obstacles but with hard work, determination, and support, he was able to break out of labels and a predetermined destiny. I believe that his participation in TRiO Upward Bound helped to give him the guidance and support he was lacking. He experienced living on the BBCC campus and being away from home for six-weeks during the TRiO Summer Academy which helped to build his self-confidence to move away to attend EWU. Due to his interest in Criminal Justice, I assisted Abraham in applying to the City of Moses Lake Police Explorer Program and he participated in it during the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades. I don't want to forget to mention that Abraham had to work throughout high school to help his family. He worked in the fields during the summers, was a courtesy clerk at Safeway, and performed manual labor at the BIT Coin Mine-Data Center.

It was my great pleasure to mentor Abraham and to remind him of his strengths and potential. It's important that everyone has a least one person in their live who is in their corner and can help to motivate them when it's hard to see the end of the road. I'm glad he let me in.

Recently, as I sat down to have coffee with Abraham; I could not help but to beam with pride. There he was, dressed in a nice button up shirt with a professional nametag while we met during our lunch break. He has definitely matured and grown into a role model citizen. He shared with me that his long-term plan is to attend law school or pursue a Master's degree.

I couldn't be more honored to write this letter of support and would love to see this young man recognized.

Sincerely,



Anita De Leon, MSW

TRiO Upward Bound Director