

Name: Juan Figueroa
Working Title: Senior Academic Counselor
Payroll Title: STDT ACAD ADVISOR3

I believe that Juan Figueroa exemplifies the criteria for building relationships/partnerships for the exemplary work that he is doing in supporting first-generation students at Earl Warren College. Juan has worked as an academic counselor at Warren College for around 4 years. His primary responsibilities are meeting with students to discuss academic options, general education requirements, and ensure academic success and progress. From my outside perspective, he is great at what he does. But it is my interaction with him OUTSIDE of his professional role that has led me to nominate him for this award.

For the past two years, I have worked alongside Juan as a facilitator for the OASIS Summer Bridge College Success Strategies course. OASIS designs this course to connect students to resources at their campus and asks for volunteers from the College to help facilitate alongside a CAPS psychologist or postdoctoral student. For the past two years, Juan and I have volunteered for this role. During the 4-week class, we facilitate community building, cultural identity discussions, discusses personal wellness, and share valuable resources alongside a professional colleague from CAPS. Although this position is outside of the official capacities of his job card, Juan demonstrates extreme commitment to his class of students, many of whom are first-generation students. I have observed him building strong bonds with his group – who view him as resource far beyond the program.

In his capacity as a Warren College Academic Advisor, Juan continues his professional relationship with these students through his leadership of the OASIS Learning Community (OLC). He serves as the facilitator for this yearlong group, which meet weekly and focus on building peer support to help ensure a student's academic and social success.

Last year, when I was drafting a proposal to create a staff committee dedicated to creating opportunities for first-generation student success and community building at Warren College, Juan was the first staff member outside of student affairs to sign up for the committee. Over the course of the past year and a half, we have built one of the strongest first-generation student communities at any of the Undergraduate Colleges. Juan has been instrumental in helping us to develop student-centered programs that focus on community, shared experience, educational opportunities, and connections to the campus. He moderates panels, shares his experience, and most importantly connects to students on their level. I have seen him again and again sit down with a students to talk about life, make sure they followed up with a resource he recommended, and even to offer to meet with them for an advising session based on their schedule. He is always the one to approach students to invite them into the group. He regularly stays after the programs to finish conversations with students.

In support of the University's mission to be student centered, he is one of the most student-centered academic advising professionals with which I have ever had the pleasure of working. He consistently goes beyond expectations to make sure students know their value and that he supports them. Although, much of the involvement he has with the first-generation student population is unrelated to his position as an academic counselor, the dedication he shows to students outside of his role helps them to see the bigger picture. Through interacting with Juan, they see that they matter, that they belong here at UC San Diego, that their status as a first-generation student can be an asset, and that staff care about their success and are willing to step outside of their offices to support students.