

CampusConnections

Spring 2025 | The Quarterly Newsletter for United Education Institute and UEI College



Bryan Harmon, 'Be the Change' Scholarship Recipient

Chula Vista Medical Assistant Student Selected for 2024 'Be the Change' Scholarship

Bryan Harmon, a student in the Medical Assistant program at UEI College in Chula Vista, earned the prestigious Be the Change Scholarship in fall 2024, a recognition that holds deep personal significance for the 35-year-old Chula Vista native. Bryan's journey to this achievement reflects his passion for dismantling healthcare stigmas in his community, advocating for racial equality, and creating meaningful change.

"I'm amazed... a little overwhelmed," Bryan said shortly after learning he was picked as this year's Be the Change Scholarship recipient. "When I first saw the announcement about the scholarship opportunity, I felt like it was a calling to me. I thought, 'Wow, this could be me. I knew I had to apply. I put a lot of time and effort into the essay.'"

The Be the Change Scholarship was created in 2020 to empower UEI students to have a voice in the discussion of social justice, equality and human rights. Applicants are asked to write an essay about how they have been impacted by social injustice and what they are personally doing to combat issues of inequality in their community.

Read more on page 4

UEI Expands to Dallas with New Campus

United Education Institute (UEI) has opened its newest campus in Dallas, Texas. Located at 1050 North Westmoreland Road, the new Dallas campus offers a range of hands-on training programs designed to prepare students for successful careers in high-demand fields, including healthcare, trades, and business. The first cohort of students started on January 30.

"The Dallas campus marks an important milestone in UEI's mission to provide accessible, industry-relevant education to students," said Joe Davila, UEI Dallas campus president. "With over 40 years of experience in providing quality career training, UEI is dedicated to empowering individuals with the skills they need to thrive in the workforce and to contributing to the economic vitality of local communities. If you are an employer looking to hire skilled workers, we invite you to talk with us about your needs."

UEI's expansion into Texas reflects the growing trend of more young people considering vocational and career training over a traditional four-year college degree because of the soaring costs of traditional higher education," Davila said.

Read more on page 3



UEI Dallas Campus

Welcome to the Spring 2025 Campus Connections Newsletter!

Welcome to the Spring 2025 Campus Connections, our newsletter dedicated to celebrating the remarkable success stories of our students. At United Education Institute (UEI) and UEI College, we take immense pride in the accomplishments of our diverse and talented student body, and we are thrilled to share their inspiring journeys with you.

At UEI, every journey is a story of perseverance, passion, and the life-changing impact of education. In this edition, we celebrate the graduates who are breaking barriers, the students who balance work, family, and coursework, and those who have discovered their true calling through our programs. These stories are powerful reminders that when determination meets opportunity, incredible transformations happen — not just for individuals, but for entire communities.

In this edition, prepare to be inspired by stories of perseverance, determination, and achievement. Each student featured has overcome unique challenges, showcasing the resilience and tenacity that make our community so extraordinary. You'll learn about students who have earned special scholarships, the first-ever baby born on a UEI campus, and the unique ways that UEI students and staff are serving the community, including UEI's response to the wildfires that devastated Los Angeles.

Thank you for being part of the UEI community. Together, we celebrate the incredible achievements of our students and look forward to witnessing many more triumphs in the future.

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COMMUNITY IMPACT

UEI Expands to Dallas with New Campus

Continued from cover

"With over 40 years of experience in providing quality career training, UEI is dedicated to empowering individuals with the skills they need to thrive in the workforce and to contributing to the economic vitality of local communities."



NPR and the Washington Post have dubbed young Americans following this trend as “the toolbelt” generation, with more and more high school graduates turning to careers in the skilled trades, such as the Electrician Technician and HVAC Technician programs offered at UEI.

“Students can expect a nurturing environment focused on their personal and professional growth, with a team of faculty and staff dedicated to helping them succeed,” Davila said. “UEI is a viable option for students who are not able to put their lives on hold for years while they attend college. We offer hands-on training from instructors who have a wealth of experience in the industries they teach.”

Initial programs being offered at the new UEI location in Dallas include Medical Assistant, Medical Billing and Insurance Coding, Dental Assistant, Electrician Technician, and Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC). The new 30,000 square-foot campus features three medical assistant labs, three dental assistant labs, three electrician labs, three HVAC labs, a medical billing classroom, computer lab, Learning Resource Center, and student and faculty lounges.

“The hands-on learning labs at UEI are modern, well-equipped spaces designed to give students a practical, immersive experience in their chosen fields. Each lab is furnished with industry-standard tools and technology, providing an

environment that mirrors real-world workplaces,” Davila said. “Students can practice their skills on industry relevant equipment under the guidance of experienced instructors, who offer both technical knowledge and personal insights from the field. Whether they’re training in HVAC, electrical, or medical assisting, students benefit from a curriculum shaped by employer feedback, ensuring that every task, tool, and scenario prepares them for success in their careers. This interactive setting allows students to build confidence and competence, fostering a seamless transition from classroom learning to professional application.”

Chula Vista Medical Assistant Student Selected for 2024 'Be the Change' Scholarship

Continued from cover

Bryan's essay was chosen from more than 500 entries across the UEI system by a committee of administrators, instructors, and staff. As the 2024 recipient, he was awarded a full-ride scholarship covering the entire tuition for his Medical Assistant program – nearly \$15,000.

"I am so extremely grateful to UEI for this honor. Today was truly a life-changing moment for me," he said. "Thank you for seeing me. Thank you for hearing me. I spoke about my family, their struggles, and my journey into healthcare. The struggles for communities of color when it comes to healthcare remain very real — even in 2024 — and I want to use my career in healthcare to make a difference."

"African Americans have lower life expectancy rates compared to white Americans, largely due to systemic racism in healthcare access and treatment," Bryan wrote in his essay. "I've seen the impact of systematic inequality firsthand. I want to use my career to be a direct advocate for healthier, more equitable futures."

Numerous studies and reports support Bryan's suggestion that there are indeed inequalities in access to healthcare among African Americans and other minorities in both California and the U.S. These disparities manifest in several ways, including access to services, quality of care, and health outcomes. A 2021 report by the California Health Care Foundation (CHCF) found that African Americans, Latinos, and other minority groups in California experience significant barriers to healthcare access. Factors such as socioeconomic status, geographic location, and systemic bias in the healthcare system contribute to disparities. Nationally, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) notes that African



Americans and other minorities are disproportionately affected by chronic diseases like diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular disease. These health issues are exacerbated by unequal access to quality healthcare services, contributing to higher rates of hospitalizations and deaths in minority populations.

"We were thrilled to learn that Bryan

was selected for the 'Be the Change' scholarship. He is an amazing student and a beacon of hope and optimism," said Serica Martinez-Ervin, executive director at UEI College in Chula Vista. "Bryan's actions demonstrate his relentless pursuit of a brighter future for himself, and his family. His essay was a testament to his vision of a more just, inclusive, and healthier world for all.

He truly deserves this honor, and we are very proud of him. Today, we celebrate not only Bryan's achievements but the profound impact he is destined to have. This scholarship will enable him to continue his studies, breaking barriers in the healthcare field, and forging a brighter, healthier future for the community."

Bryan's journey to this point has been marked by both personal loss and profound determination. After working in youth services for several years after high school, including a role as a camp director, he faced a series of family tragedies that forced him to reevaluate his career path. "In 2015, I lost my nephew, which made me step back from working with kids for a while," he explained. "It was a triggering moment; I wanted to be closer to my family."

His experiences caring for loved ones in hospice settings ignited a desire to pursue a career in healthcare. "I knew

that the energy I possessed was meant for helping others," Bryan said. "I was 34 and trying to figure it all out. When I heard about UEI, it sparked something in me."

When a friend told him about her experience at UEI, Bryan decided to visit the Chula Vista campus for a tour. When he learned about the Medical Assistant program, he felt that was his calling.

Bryan's hard work at UEI has already paid off; he has achieved honor roll status since starting the program. "Once I experienced honor roll in the first month, I thought, 'Okay, I'm getting honor roll every month,'" he said, his excitement palpable. "It gave me purpose. I realized that I can actually have a career in healthcare."

Looking ahead, Bryan is focused on becoming a phlebotomist, with aspirations to eventually pursue a career as a physician's assistant. "I'm no longer capped," he stated. "I didn't realize how

many doors would open for me until I took that first step."

As he continues his studies, Bryan's commitment to making a difference in healthcare and within his community remains steadfast. "I don't know where this journey will take me or my family, but I know I'll be in a better space than I was before," he concluded, with a hopeful smile.

With his full-ride scholarship and newfound direction, Bryan is poised to make a lasting impact — not only in his own life but also in the lives of those around him.

Watch Brian's Story!

Bryan's story was featured on ABC 10News in San Diego. Check out UEI's YouTube channel to see it at www.youtube.com/@UEI.

"Thank you for seeing me. Thank you for hearing me. I spoke about my family, their struggles, and my journey into healthcare. The struggles for communities of color when it comes to healthcare remain very real — even in 2024 — and I want to use my career in healthcare to make a difference."

Elected Officials Inspire Graduates Across UEI Campuses

Graduation ceremonies at United Education Institute (UEI) and UEI College took on an extra layer of significance in 2024 — which continues in 2025 — as elected officials from across the country joined in celebrating the achievements of students. From members of Congress to state and local leaders, these distinguished guests delivered powerful messages of perseverance, ambition, and hope, inspiring graduates as they prepared to take the next step in their careers. At some ceremonies, officials presented graduates with certificates and letters of special recognition, including Congressional Certificates of Recognition.

“With campuses spanning multiple states, UEI has long been committed to

providing hands-on career training and fostering student success,” said Lynn Mulherin, vice president of government relations. “The presence of public officials at graduation underscores UEI’s role in workforce development and community progress. We are deeply grateful to all who took the time to join us for graduation ceremonies and to those who sent special recognition to the graduates.”

Speakers recognized the hard work and dedication of students, many of whom overcame significant challenges to complete their programs and reaffirmed the importance of skilled professionals in driving local economies forward, reiterating that UEI’s role in workforce development is vital to the community.

U.S. Congressman Josh Harder,

speaking at the Stockton ceremony, told graduates: “This is the future. These are the folks who are going to be building and rebuilding Stockton! Thank you for all the work you’re going to do! All of the work you’ve been doing is not just to have that moment in the sun, but the work you’re going to be doing for decades to come to make sure that all of our lives are better off because of the education you have at UEI. Thank you to the faculty and administrators at UEI for making sure that folks are learning skills that we need in our community because let me tell you, everything you’ve been learning you’ll use tomorrow. We need it, so thank you and let’s get to work!” Congressman Harder also presented each graduate with a Certificate of Congressional Recognition.

“This is the future. These are the folks who are going to be building and rebuilding Stockton! Thank you for all the work you’re going to do!”



U.S. Congressman Josh Harder at UEI Stockton Graduation

U.S. Congressman Brad Sherman, speaking at the Reseda graduation, said: “I am a strong proponent for making sure that vocational education is a full participant in all the student aid programs, especially student loans and the Pell Grant. Everyone deserves access to quality education.”

Rep. Sherman also presented UEI Reseda Executive Director Crystal Ramirez with a flag that was flown over the U.S. Capitol for an organizational recipient with outstanding service to the

San Fernando Valley.

Numerous lawmakers provided UEI graduates with letters or certificates of recognition for graduates in 2024, including U.S. Senator Mark Kelly to commemorate the class of 2024 in Phoenix; U.S. Representative Jim Costa for Fresno; U.S. Representative David Scott for Morrow; U.S. Representative Debbie Lesko for Phoenix; California State Senator Angelique Ashby for Sacramento; California State Senator Shannon Grove for Bakersfield;

California Assemblywoman Eloise Gomez-Reyes for Ontario; California Assemblyman Jesse Gabriel for Reseda; Senator Lena Gonzalez honored Huntington Park’s Valedictorian with a California Senate Certificate of Recognition; California Assemblyman David Alvarez for Chula Vista; California Assemblywoman Laurie Davies for Oceanside; and U.S. Representative Tony Cardenas for 4.0 graduates in Reseda. Thank you all for honoring our graduates.



U.S. Congressman Brad Sherman at UEI Reseda Graduation

“I am a strong proponent for making sure that vocational education is a full participant in all the student aid programs, especially student loans and the Pell Grant. Everyone deserves access to quality education.”

Elected Officials Inspire Graduates Across UEI Campuses

Continued



UEI Mesa Graduation

Arizona State Representative Seth Blatmann at the Mesa ceremony.



UEI Bakersfield Graduation

California Assemblyman Vince Fong (now a newly elected member of the U.S. Congress) at the Bakersfield ceremony.



UEI West Covina Graduation

California State Senator Susan Rubio at the West Covina ceremony.



UEI Stone Mountain Graduation

Georgia State Representative Imani Barnes at the Stone Mountain ceremony.



UEI Las Vegas Graduation

Nevada State Senator Roberta Lange at the Las Vegas ceremony.



UEI Sacramento Graduation

California Assemblywoman Stephanie Nguyen at the Sacramento ceremony.



UEI Mesa Graduation

Arizona State Representative Lorena Austin at the Mesa ceremony.



UEI Oceanside Graduation

Oceanside City Council Member Jimmy Figueroa at the Oceanside ceremony.



UEI Fresno Graduation

California Senator Anna Caballero and Assemblyman Joaquin Arambula at the Fresno ceremony.



UEI Morrow Graduation

Councilwomen Renee Knight at the Morrow Ceremony.



UEI West Covina Graduation

Mayor Tony Wu at the West Covina ceremony.



UEI Riverside Graduation

California Assemblyman Bill Essayli at the Riverside ceremony.



UEI Phoenix Graduation

Arizona State Senator Ken Bennett at the Phoenix ceremony.



UEI Chula Vista Graduation

Mayor John McCann spoke at the Chula Vista ceremony.



UEI Chula Vista Graduation

California State Assemblyman David Alvarez at the Chula Vista ceremony.



UEI Gardena Graduation

California Assemblyman Mike Gipson at the Gardena ceremony.



UEI Garden Grove Graduation

California Assemblyman Tri Ta at the Garden Grove ceremony.



UEI Huntington Park Graduation

Councilwoman Esmeralda Castillo at the Huntington Park ceremony.



UEI Stockton Graduation

Mayor Christine Fugazi at the Stockton Ceremony.



UEI Las Vegas Graduation

Nevada Assemblywoman Clara Thomas at the Las Vegas ceremony.



UEI Chula Vista Graduation

Deputy Mayor Alfonso Gonzalez at the Chula Vista ceremony.



UEI Oceanside Graduation

Mayor Esther Sanchez at the Oceanside ceremony.



UEI Riverside Graduation

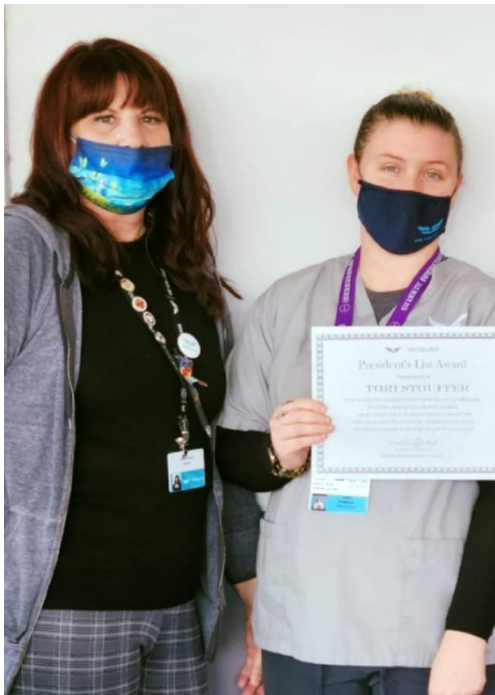
Assemblyman Corey Jackson at the Riverside Ceremony.



UEI Morrow Graduation

Representative Eric Bell at the Morrow Ceremony.

Special Needs Mom Gains New Skills Through Medical Assisting



"I wanted to show my kids no matter what happens in life, you can go back and get your education. It's never too late to do what you want to. You have to put your mind to it and do hard work and push to get there."

Tori Stouffer left high school when she was 17 but when her children were born with special needs, she saw how important a good education in the medical field could be for her.

"For me to be a mother and have kids that have a lot of health problems, I should be well-equipped in the medical field to understand exactly what's going on with my kids so I can make sure they get the best care that I can give them," she said.

Tori's son was born with a genetic mutation that makes him susceptible to developing cancer at any time, a tilted brain, and a condition called papilledema, which puts pressure on the optic nerve in his eye sockets. Her daughters are autistic, dyslexic and have ADD and ADHD. Taking care of her children is a full-time job that has made working difficult at times.

"Every time I start working, I lose my jobs because of my son's health," she said. "With a medical background if it happens again, I can do more for him and help

take care of him, so it doesn't hinder me in the working field either."

In 2019, Tori took the first step, achieving her high school diploma. Once she had that, she didn't want to stop. She completed a Pharmacy Technician program and got an associate degree in medical administrative assisting. The opportunity for more hands-on learning brought her to UEI College's Medical Assistant Program at the Oceanside campus.

"Tori was the perfect student that you always want in your class," said Susan Cole, Tori's instructor. "She came in and even on her first day she's willing to help anyone, she's a quick learner, and you don't have to tell her things twice. I thought I've got gold in my class right now. She was the kind of student you never had to worry about her getting her work done."

Tori was eager to learn skills that could help her children and more about the medical field too.

"I learned how to draw blood and give

injections," she said. "I learned the proper way to manually take blood pressure and more medical terms. I gained a better outlook on medical assistants who are taking the phone calls. I never understood how stressful or how much that person has to do on a daily basis with the doctors. Now that I'm in it, I understand that it is a lot more hectic than it seemed to be."

During her externship, Tori hit a series of bumps in the road that made completing the program difficult, but she pushed forward. In the end she was hired by her externship site.

"I wanted to show my kids no matter what happens in life, you can go back and get your education," she said. "It's never too late to do what you want to. You have to put your mind to it and do hard work and push to get there. The staff at UEI accept you with open arms and they wind up being extended family. They help you in each and every way when you're there to help you be successful in life and get you to the finish line."

Stopping the Excuses, Realizing Success

When she was still pregnant with her oldest daughter, Ashley Lister was told that her child had a rare heart defect and would be born with only half a heart.

"It was heartbreaking for sure," Ashley said. "You don't understand why. Is it something you did wrong? Is it something your partner did wrong? What causes a baby to be born with half a heart? It doesn't make sense."

For the next 13 months after she was born, Ashley's daughter lived at Phoenix Children's Hospital, receiving care to help her heart function normally. It was a challenging time for the family, but it also sparked something deep inside of Ashley.

"The doctors and nurses had so much compassion and sympathy," she said. "You never want to have your kid in the hospital that long, but they kept you going. They gave you the hope you needed. They were there for any conversation you wanted to have. I slowly started thinking I wanted to be like them."

Ashley's job in the restaurant industry paid enough to keep her comfortable and complacent, but she was dreaming of a career in the medical field. For years, she talked herself out of changing careers. The excuses of money, time and training

kept her stuck until one late night when she was struggling to sleep.

"I was searching for schools or programs to get me out of the restaurant industry," Ashley said. "I was tired of working 50 hours and feeling exhausted. I was looking for registered nursing programs, but then medical assisting came up. I had never thought about medical assisting to get my foot in the door. UEI College popped up. I ended up booking an appointment to tour the Mesa campus."

During the tour, Ashley said she was blown away by how welcoming the staff were. They treated her daughter like family, answered all her questions, and gave her the support she needed.

"At the end of the tour he said to me, 'You said it yourself that you're full of excuses. Stop hiding behind your excuses.' I just thought, he's right," Ashley said. She signed up for the Medical Assistant program and started classes the following week.

"I was hesitant because of the work schedule I had and two toddlers and the natural stress you have in life anyways," Ashley said. "I had Mr. Craig for my instructor for the first mod and he was

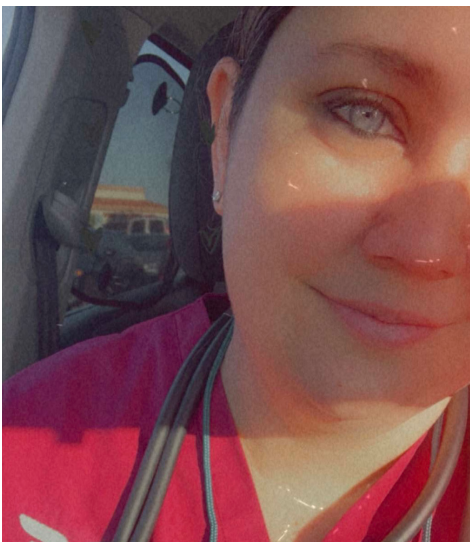
the reason why I wanted to do so good in school. He captured each one of us in our class. He would keep us busy, hands-on. It was something where I would sit down at the end of the day and feel really excited about what I was doing and getting into the medical field. I knew I could do this."

At the end of her first mod, Ashley had achieved a perfect 100 percent. From then on, she had the confidence to keep pushing forward.

"I thought in the beginning I would do everything I could just to pass," she said. "Then when I got my first 100 it made me think if I could do it once, let's keep doing it. Every mod I've had I've gotten 100 percent. My GPA is a perfect 4.0. I never want to miss school. It has given me the confidence to know nothing can hold me back."

Ashley graduated with her 4.0 GPA, and her oldest daughter is also doing well. She's healthy and preparing for kindergarten.

"Don't give up. Keep pushing," Ashley said. "There are days when you don't want to, but you have to remember it's worth it at the end of the day."



"Don't give up. Keep pushing, There are days when you don't want to, but you have to remember it's worth it at the end of the day."

Passion Sparks Achievement for Dental Assisting Student

Aaliyah De La Cruz has never seen herself as someone who was very good at school, but after attending UEI she discovered maybe it wasn't her abilities that were lacking, but her passion.

Aaliyah says growing up she struggled with school and with her home life. She recalls watching her siblings excel, while she struggled with every assignment and was told she would never amount to anything. She endured long hours at the dinner table, doing and re-doing assignments until they were acceptable. The trauma planted a seed in her mind to someday prove everyone wrong.

"I wanted to show my mom that even though she put me and my siblings through a lot I could do it and not give up," she said. "I wanted to walk across that stage with a diploma and a smile on my face and show her that I'm a fighter and that I have resilience."

After graduating high school, she attended Empire Beauty School for Cosmetology, but she struggled to focus.

"I felt like it wasn't for me," she said. "I like doing hair and makeup but when I was there, I didn't feel comfortable. I didn't feel like it was for me. I couldn't see myself doing this for hours each day."

At the time, Aaliyah's partner was attending the electrical program at UEI in Phoenix and encouraged her to take a look at the school.

"I wasn't really sure, then another friend told me she was doing dental assisting and loving it," Aaliyah said. "I told her I had never considered dental, and she told me she was the same way, but the school had changed her mind. So I decided to give it a try."

The first day of class, Aaliyah jumped right in, making impressions, and working hands-on in the lab. It instantly lit a spark inside of her.

"I was so excited," she said. "I posted to my Instagram story and shared it with

all my friends. They were all surprised by how excited I was. They had never heard me talk about something like that before."

Aaliyah's excitement was only compounded by the fact that she got to attend school with her partner. They would go to the campus together, take their breaks together, study together and encourage each other.

"She told me even if I wanted to quit, she wouldn't let me," Aaliyah said.

Luckily, Aaliyah never felt the urge to quit. She was feeling career-ready after just eight months in the program.

"I like that I get to go there and learn what I want to learn," she said. "Everyone there is nice and kind. If you need help, they will help you right away. I have fallen in love with my program. I love the school itself."

As she looks towards graduation and a future in the dental field, Aaliyah is also taking away a new love for herself.

"I am a fighter," she said. "I don't and won't give up. I will make my family even more proud of me and do better than them like they told me. I will never give up no matter how hard I'm struggling. If I fall, I get back up and keep trying. I have resilience. My advice would be if someone tells you that you can't do anything, don't let that stop you from what you want to do. Take the right path and keep your head up."



"Everyone there is nice and kind. If you need help they will help, you right away. I have fallen in love with my program. I love the school itself."

Overcoming Adversity: Melinda's Path to Becoming a Medical Assistant

"Being a single mom is very hard. It takes a village to raise children, and I am grateful for my family's support. It's never too late to adjust your life and make a change for yourself."



Melinda Lo has faced life's greatest challenges at every stage, overcoming each adversity and learning to prioritize herself. As she graduated from UEI College Fresno's Medical Assistant program in August 2024, she was proud of the positive changes she'd made in her own life and in the lives of her children.

Her early years were marked by educational struggles and personal hardships. Growing up, she faced difficulties in school and later endured an abusive seven-year relationship that hindered her ability to pursue further education. Additionally, she experienced the tragic loss of her father and sister and endured periods of homelessness.

Driven by a desire to improve her living situation for herself and her children, Melinda explained, "I was very determined to go back to school. School meant a lot to me; it still does."

Initially, she aspired to become a teacher and tried to attend college in 2017. However, due to the challenges of her abusive relationship, she had to leave the program. In fall 2023, Melinda found her second chance. Undeterred by her first attempt at college, she enrolled in UEI's Medical Assistant program. The supportive environment and comprehensive curriculum at UEI gave her the foundation she needed to succeed.

A significant influence on her decision was the passing of her sister. Melinda shared, "Seeing my sister pass away put me in a very sad state. I realized that because I couldn't help her, I wanted to help others." Her sister's dedication to helping children and young adults with diabetes inspired Melinda to pursue a career where she could make a difference.

During her time at UEI, Melinda developed essential skills like time

management, prioritization, and public speaking. Her hard work and perseverance paid off, earning her praise from both instructors and peers.

Balancing her studies with the responsibilities of single motherhood was challenging. "Being a single mom is very hard. It takes a village to raise children, and I am grateful for my family's support," she said.

Looking ahead, Melinda aspires to work in urgent care or women's health, with a potential interest in returning to UEI as an instructor.

"It's never too late to adjust your life and make a change for yourself," Melinda advises. Her story is a testament to the impact of UEI's programs and the importance of resilience, faith, and support in overcoming life's challenges.

Building a Future Beyond Survival, Finding Purpose at UEI

Michael Chadburn's path to success didn't follow a typical script — it started with a fight for his life. The valedictorian speaker at the fall graduation ceremony for UEI College in Bakersfield told the audience, "I am medically not supposed to be here. Medically, I died in September of 2017." A reverent silence followed, as he recounted the remarkable journey that led him to being at the podium on stage, in cap and gown, to celebrate with his fellow graduates.

After surviving a brain tumor, multiple surgeries, and a near-fatal battle with sepsis, Michael faced a long road to recovery. It was not just physical rehabilitation but a complete reinvention of his career and future. From the ICU to the classroom, Michael's determination carried him through to graduation from UEI's Electrician Technician (ET) program.

Michael's world shifted dramatically on February 17, 2017, when what started as a numb lip turned into a terrifying medical crisis. A CT scan revealed a benign astrocytoma brain tumor on his spinal cord, marking the beginning of a long series of surgeries and procedures — 13 in total. Michael fought through months of ICU care and years of physical therapy to regain his strength. "I knew I had a lot left to do," he said. "Life itself

kept me going."

Throughout his hospital stay and recovery, Michael's friends and family rallied around. His wife, Kinlynn, was a constant source of strength, urging him to move beyond unfulfilling jobs and pursue a more rewarding career. His father, too, had always encouraged him to consider a trade, believing in Michael's potential. With their support, Michael found the motivation to seek a career that would bring both stability and pride.

After applying to UEI, he found himself on the phone with an enrollment representative, Lisa. "From the start of our conversation, I felt a change inside myself. I knew that I was ready, and most importantly, I needed this change," Michael said in his valedictorian speech.

Once in the Electrician Technician program, he discovered that the hands-on learning environment was exactly what he needed. The practical approach helped him manage his ADHD and move past his former reluctance toward education. He quickly excelled, especially in technical skills like conduit bending and motor controls, and his dedication paid off. He graduated as valedictorian, an achievement that confirmed he had found the right path.

Michael is now focused on building his career, actively applying to both



large companies like PG&E and smaller electrical firms where he hopes to gain hands-on experience. In the meantime, his entrepreneurial spirit keeps him busy with small electrical jobs on his own, allowing him to put his skills to use as he seeks a more permanent role. "I'm living up to what my dad knew I would be, and the life I would build," he says.

From overcoming critical medical challenges to graduating as a skilled electrician technician, Michael is prepared to step confidently into a new career. Even in the face of overwhelming odds, he's proven that it's possible to rebuild and redefine life on your own terms.



"I felt a change inside myself. I knew that I was ready, and most importantly I needed this change."

Breaking Barriers: From Tesla to UEI and Beyond

In 2023, Alejandra Espinoza was working for Tesla. One day on the job, she crossed paths with one of the engineers and got to chatting about what his job entails. She found it fascinating, and four months later, she was transferred to a new position to feed that interest. Although she didn't have experience in the electrical field, she quickly adapted and rose to the challenge of her role.

"I had to learn and adapt to everything in two weeks," she recalls. Her responsibilities included inspecting and analyzing batteries that powered solar packs and reporting her findings to on-site engineers. This hands-on experience grew her passion for electrical work. "I think this is what I want to do," she told her supervisor, "I could see myself doing this."

He told her to look into programs and she landed on the Electrician Technician program at UEI College in Stockton. She knew a formal education would propel her into the career she wanted. Despite her initial hesitation about entering a male-dominated field, Alejandra found encouragement and respect from her peers and instructors at UEI.

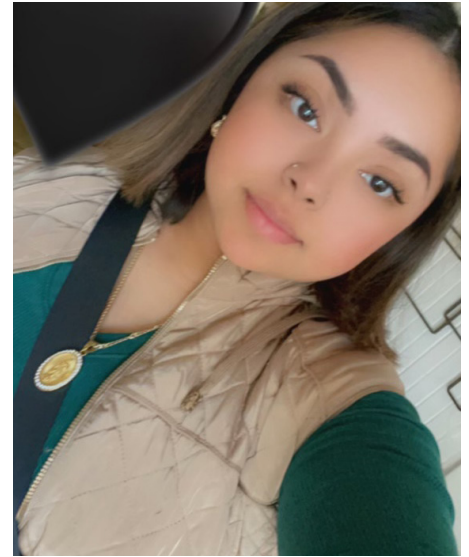
"The teachers actually care about your future," Alejandra notes, highlighting the supportive environment she found at UEI.

Her journey was not without challenges, particularly with being one of the few women in her program. "I was terrified because, you know, I thought they were going to treat me differently," she admits. However, her fears were unfounded. "Everybody treated me with respect," she says, reflecting on the camaraderie that defined her experience.

At UEI, Alejandra learned about basic safety protocols and more advanced tasks like bending conduit, hooking up motors, and working with PLCs and solar systems. The program's combination of theoretical knowledge and hands-on practice provided her with the tools she needed to succeed. "This trade is not for everyone; it's a challenge within itself. It's book knowledge and hands-on," she explains. The extensive curriculum and supportive instructors were pivotal in her education, helping her to overcome initial fears and excel in the program.

"It's hard to go into a field that's not really known for women, but just go in there and show what you know," she advises. Her own journey is a powerful example of perseverance and believing in oneself.

Looking ahead, Alejandra plans to continue her education in electrical engineering, aiming for a bachelor's



degree and possibly a master's degree. Her ultimate goal is to work with companies like SpaceX or Boeing, where she can contribute to groundbreaking projects.

Alejandra is poised for success and hungry for more knowledge. She has truly found her passion and is dedicated to a life of learning. Her experience at UEI Stockton has not only equipped her with essential skills, but also reinforced her belief in her capabilities and limitless potential.

"I could see myself doing this. The teachers actually care about your future. Everybody treated me with respect."

HVAC Student Learns to Put Herself First

After more than a decade of dealing with an alcohol addiction, Tabatha Longver finally decided it was time to put herself first.

Tabatha had spent 13 years as a stay-at-home mom, and while her family was the most important thing to her, their concerns were not enough to get her to quit drinking. Eventually, the drinking got so bad that it led to seizures and hospitalizations, and Tabatha made the decision that she was done.

After nearly a year of sobriety, Tabatha was ready to go back to school.

“I decided I needed something else,” she said. “I needed something under my belt for me. When I quit drinking, I didn’t do it for my kids or my husband. I did it just for me. I needed to keep that mentality going to keep me motivated to not drink. I need to do things for me.”

Tabatha had always enjoyed working with her hands, fixing things around her home. She looked up trade schools and after a quick tour, she was enrolled in UEI Tacoma’s Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning Technician program.

“I was nervous. It was crazy,” Tabatha said. “I hadn’t been in a school setting in over a decade. My teacher was really nice and the people there were great. You go to school and you’re expecting to be in a classroom full of people your age. That wasn’t the case for me. The younger kids in there helped motivate me. I couldn’t

believe they had so much motivation at their young age. Everyone was just super nice.”

In addition to improving herself, Tabatha found herself inspiring her daughter. Her oldest child was ready to give up on school because of the bullying she had faced. Tabatha promised her they would both go back to school and get through it together.

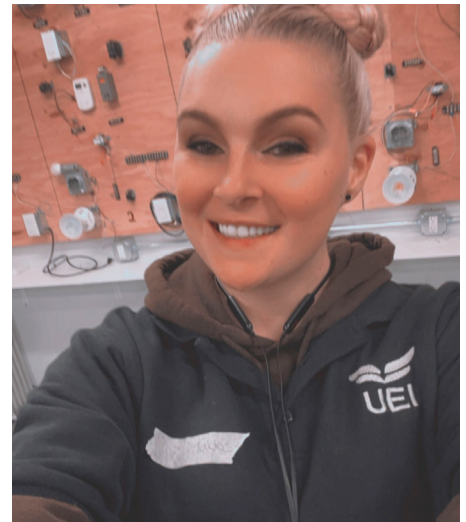
“I want to be a good role model for my kids and show them education is so important, and consistency, and keeping your word, and showing yourself you can do something,” Tabatha said. “Prove yourself right because it’s one of the greatest feelings in the world.”

Tabatha did prove herself right. She has been consistent with her schooling and her sobriety.

“All of my sponsors and mentors have been blown away with how I’ve been doing,” she said. “Even the other students in class have been cheering me on. We talk about our lives and it’s a really open environment. I can go talk to anyone. School gives me something to do so I don’t get lost.”

Tabatha never graduated high school or college in the past. Finishing this program holds a special meaning for her.

“I can’t wait to walk [in graduation] because I’ve never walked before,” she said. “I know this is something I’ve worked really hard at for nine months,



so it’s a big deal to me. I want people to look at my story and know anything is possible. I’ve been through some of the worst things a person can go through in life and I’m still in college. You have to want it for yourself. If you want it, you can do anything.”

A career in HVAC is also something Tabatha is looking forward to.

“I’m looking forward to being outside and not chauffeuring around because I have to do everything for everyone,” she said. “I get to go to work. It’s my thing. It’s my job. It keeps me grounded and keeps me busy. I’m almost sad the program is so short because I really enjoy going. I wish I enjoyed school this much when I was a kid.”

“The younger kids in there helped motivate me. I couldn’t believe they had so much motivation at their young age. Everyone was just super nice.”

Balancing Motherhood and a Medical Career at UEI Gardena

Home-cooked meals, clean clothes folded with care, a tidy space, and a predictable schedule are a few things that make Eva Perez's house a home. She takes great pride in leading the home she's created for her five young children.

Her children, aged between two and twelve, are her primary motivation. As a child of the foster care system herself, Eva grew up without a consistent mother or father figure in her life. She knows the responsibility and impact she has on her own children. "I am their role model. I love helping others, which is why I'm going back to school to do what I love and show my kids the importance of education and making money to support themselves one day."

Inspired by her children and wanting to lead by example, Eva enrolled in UEI Gardena's Medical Assistant program. Her interest in the medical field began at young age as she watched family and friends endure a variety of health issues. When she became a mother, she strove for a deeper understanding of basic health needs and emergency responses to ensure her children received the best care. "Nothing makes me happier than being able to help people and potentially change their lives," Eva says.

While running her busy home, Eva has taken advantage of UEI's flexible program hours that allow her to be present as a mom and as a student. She's developed a meticulous routine to manage her responsibilities. "I had to learn how to create a realistic schedule that includes time for schoolwork and personal activities," she notes. "Setting goals and breaking large tasks into smaller, more manageable steps has been crucial."

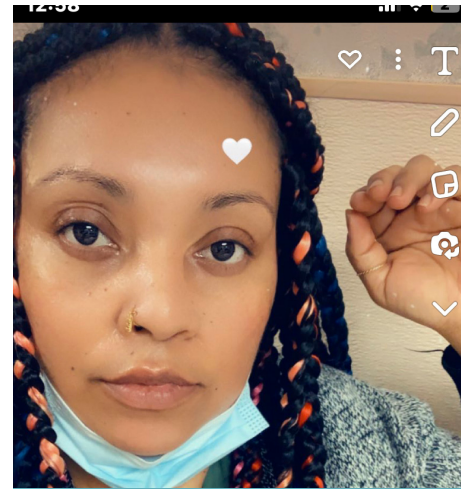
Eva also emphasizes the importance of staying organized and maintaining a clean and orderly home, which helps her remain calm and productive. "Setting schedules and routines helps me run a

smooth program in my own home, so I can have time for myself — mentally and physically — and continue with my education."

At UEI Gardena, Eva is met with the same clean and organized environment, helping her feel confident as she progresses through the program. Support from staff and her teacher, Ms. Rios, has been particularly motivating. "Ms. Rios is a smart, sweet person who takes her time to teach and show us hands-on training," Eva explains. "Thank you, Ms. Rios, for inspiring me to finish my medical assistant career."

After she completes the program, Eva hopes to work in a pediatric setting to play on her strengths and continue to grow in the field. She also plans to continue learning by pursuing a certification in phlebotomy. Her drive for success goes beyond personal achievement — she hopes to create a legacy of resilience and dedication for her children.

"My children are my everything. They are my backbone. If it wasn't for them, I don't know where I would be," Eva reflects. Through her experiences at UEI Gardena, she is not only transforming her own life, but also setting an inspiring example for her children and countless others.



"I'm going back to school to do what I love and show my kids the importance of education and making money to support themselves one day."

A Night and Day Difference for Riverside Student

When Timothy Thompson enrolled in the Medical Billing and Insurance Coding program at UEI College in Riverside, his life was in turmoil. He had dealt with addiction on and off for years but after a particularly bad relapse, he was ready to do something new.

“During my last relapse I was in a tent in the middle of nowhere and I really said to myself, ‘Something needs to change,’” Timothy said. “I’m not getting any younger. I need to get my life back together. School was a big part of it.”

Timothy always knew he wanted to be in the medical field. He had attended a trade school in the past and he knew how valuable the hands-on learning could be. UEI made it easy to get started.

“UEI has multiple programs. If you want to get the experience and the hands-on that will set you apart in an interview, it’s a good option to go through,” Timothy said. “My counselor, Leo, was there for me. I signed up in December and then I got Covid so I had to drop out. At first I thought I was not going to go back. Leo contacted me while I had Covid and told me he would be there any time I was ready. I appreciated that he went out of his way. That’s what I love about UEI. The teachers and everyone there will go to bat for you and make sure you get that career and you start the career of your choice.”

“Congratulation, Tim. Your future

looks really bright,” Leo said. “It’s all worth it at the end. This is what we do best — we help change lives!”

Timothy has always been drawn to the medical field. The Medical Billing and Insurance Coding program gave him a new way to get involved.

“I really enjoyed it. It’s kind of like, when you’re looking at claims and figuring stuff out you become an investigator,” Timothy said. “You have to question why they aren’t paying. What code did I enter wrong? When you have to write collection letters, that was one of my top things I enjoyed was making up story lines and how we can work with them.”

Starting school after taking several years off can be daunting but Timothy said his classmates — and especially his teacher — made him feel welcome.

“You get that fear and the thoughts that you won’t be able to, or you won’t be good enough. What if I get into the field and I don’t like it?” Timothy said. “Through learning in class and getting on the computer and having to do claims, I knew deep down this is the field I need to be in and I just kept striving forward. I’m truly grateful for [my instructor] Mrs. Hernandez because she was really there for me. She always helped me out and encouraged me. She had faith in me. That’s one thing I loved... going to her class every day hearing the



encouragement and her being there on my side to make sure that I did everything I could to get to go on my extern.”

Through completion of his externship and graduating, Timothy has maintained his sobriety. He says it’s a night and day difference from where he was less than a year ago.

“Words can’t describe,” he said. “Where I was before, not caring about life or knowing where I was going to go in life, to now being able to sit there and know I finished school, my externship, there is nothing that can stop me now. I’m in a career field. I can pursue my life... Don’t give up. You can do this. Stay strong. I look at it like the light at the end of the tunnel. I did this from January to August and it went by so fast. There are times you may sit in class and think, this is so hard, I don’t know if I can do this, but don’t give up on yourself. Believe in yourself. You can do this. If this is the field you want to be in and what you have to do to better your life, it’s what you want to do.”

“Through learning in class and getting on the computer and having to do claims, I knew deep down this is the field I need to be in and I just kept striving forward.”

Finding Hope After Loss, Building a New Future at UEI College

"I love my class. I love learning. I love my instructor. It just feels good to be learning something new and gaining important skills. Everything about the program is enjoyable to me."

Joselin Castro had always been a good student, but when her mother passed away just two weeks after her high school graduation, her future suddenly felt uncertain.

"All the optimism and excitement I had at graduation passed along with her," Joselin said. "I grew very depressed over the summer. I was also experiencing financial hardship from the funeral costs and college expenses. Still, I pushed myself to go to university, but with no motivation and being at such a low point, I withdrew before my first semester ended."

To support herself and her family, Joselin got a job. However, in 2024, while contemplating a path to happiness and fulfillment, she discovered UEI College in Ontario.

"I've always liked helping people," Joselin said. "That actually brings me satisfaction. I like listening to people and their problems. I felt like I wasn't being productive at my job. I knew there was an opportunity somewhere; I just had to find it. I saw the school one day as I was leaving work, and it just felt like there was a reason."

When Joselin learned about the



Medical Assistant program, it reminded her of her mother, who had been a nurse in Mexico many years ago.

"My mom was always such a kind person," she said. "She was generous, thoughtful, and accepting of everyone, no matter what. I feel like those are traits I can develop in this career. I would love to be more like her and have that attitude and approach to life."

Though returning to school was challenging, the program at UEI brought a renewed sense of purpose to Joselin's life.

"I love my class. I love learning. I love my instructor," she shared. "She is so attentive and great at explaining things. It just feels good to be learning something new and gaining important skills. Everything about the program is enjoyable

to me. There isn't one boring thing. I love going to class, talking to everyone, and seeing the new students. Everyone is nervous at first, but once you ease them in, they realize how cool it is."

Today, Joselin's passion drives her forward.

"My mom was always my biggest supporter in school," she said. "When she passed away, I lost that support and motivation. Now, it's up to me to push myself. It's hard, but I'm so glad I did. I feel so much more optimistic about what's next."

After graduation, Joselin plans to gain experience in the field for a few years before returning to school to further her medical career.

"Take a risk," she advised. "It's hard and intimidating not knowing how your schedule will work, but when you jump in, you'll find a way to put the pieces in place and feel comfortable. Not only that, but you gain so much self-satisfaction knowing you've done something that benefits not only your life but others' lives too. UEI is a great school."

A Lifelong Learner's Path Back to Healthcare

After working as a surgical medical assistant in Arizona, Darshel Landry never imagined he'd find himself back in the classroom. However, a move to California during the pandemic — and the need to recertify his credentials — led him to UEI College in West Covina, where he found a supportive community that reignited his passion for healthcare.

"When I first visited UEI, I was impressed by the diversity and sense of community," Darshel shared. "It felt like a place where people from all walks of life came together for common goals. That energy was inspiring."

At first, Darshel was apprehensive about starting over. Balancing work, school, family responsibilities, and his own personal growth seemed overwhelming. However, with the support of his instructors and peers, he quickly found his footing. "The staff and teachers at UEI made me feel like I wasn't alone in this. They checked in on me, supported me, and genuinely cared about my progress," he said.

Darshel's journey hasn't been without challenges. He juggles his coursework alongside helping his aging grandparents and maintaining his role as a deep-water lifeguard and swim instructor.

"At times, it felt like I was in school forever, but I realized this is what I want to do. It adds value to my life and reminds me why I love helping others," he said.

Upon graduating, Darshel is excited to re-enter the medical field with renewed skills and a fresh perspective. Looking ahead, he dreams of continuing his education to become a nurse and possibly pursuing a doctoral degree in oncology or medical research.

"My time at UEI has reminded me of the importance of community and the pursuit of knowledge. This experience has not only prepared me for my career but also reignited my belief in the power of education and the impact we can have on others' lives," he reflected.

For Darshel, recertifying as a medical assistant has turned into a step toward creating meaningful change for himself and for others.



"My time at UEI has reminded me of the importance of community and the pursuit of knowledge. This experience has not only prepared me for my career but also reignited my belief in the power of education and the impact we can have on others' lives."

Dental Assistant Graduate Learns to Lead Through Positivity

Trauna Lewis was getting by working various security jobs for concerts and events but when the pandemic shut down all those opportunities, just as she was turning 24, it caused her to take a deeper look at what she was passionate about. She found her answer at United Education Institute in Las Vegas with the dental assisting program.

“The perspective I have of myself is I’m not a quitter,” she said. “Whatever I put my mind to, I can do. Not a lot of people can do what I did. I understand that because it’s hard. For me, I feel like a rock star. I feel really proud of myself. I feel like I knocked down a lot of walls that my brain has built up for me. I’m no longer that girl who thinks I can’t do it. I did it and you can do it too.”

As soon as she stepped on campus at UEI, Trauna felt excited. The walls were covered with pictures of graduates and the staff welcomed her in. When she began classes, her instructors set a positive tone. The fact that her program was focused on smiles added to the experience.

“I just feel like everyone needs a good smile from time to time,” Trauna said. “Being a dental assistant was a way to help each other. It was the aspect of making people smile. It’s bigger than fixing teeth.”

Making people smile became a personal goal for Trauna and the staff on campus noticed.

“Trauna was an excellent student,” said Rose White, campus president. “She always had a great smile and was friendly with her classmates and staff at the campus. She was always willing to help classmates at the Learning Resources Center. I saw Trauna as someone who took responsibility for her education and made sure she stays on track and strives hard to stay on the president’s list.”

It was because of that dedication and positivity that Trauna was asked to be an ambassador, a role that she grew into.

“I felt like not just anyone can be an ambassador,” she said. “You have to be able to lead people correctly, especially when it comes to school. That little piece of you that can help them and push them to keep going — that’s what I love. I wish someone was like that for me. I just thought if people need that extra push and someone thinks I can do that then the challenge is accepted. I loved it.”

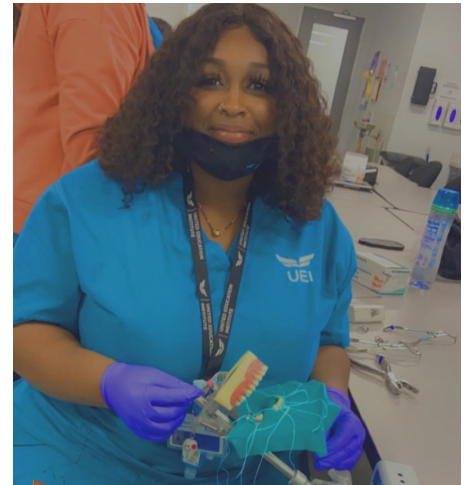
Trauna’s example inspired many people on campus. She encouraged more students to become ambassadors and helped the program to double in size. By the time she graduated, she had a new outlook on life. Not only did she have the training she needed to become a dental assistant, but she had the training to become a leader as well.

“It was just the commitment of it. You have to stay committed,” she said. “A lot of times life gets in the way to where we have a habit of just trying to get rid of things that are making it the hardest.”

“Your brain tries to shut down that part of your heart that wants to do more with things like, ‘Remember what happened last time? It didn’t work out so good.’ Sometimes you have to shut off that part of your mind and go into ‘Black Widow’ mode,” she said. “Focus on what you want and go straight into it. Don’t worry about what anyone else is talking about. Don’t listen to yourself when you say you can’t do it because you are literally doing it. That makes it easy to take that first step and after that, you just keep riding that bicycle.”

Trauna was named honorary valedictorian for her class at the Las Vegas graduation ceremony. She looks forward to gaining more experience at as a dental assistant and maybe someday going back to school to become a hygienist.

She said, “If I did this, what else can I do?”



“I just feel like everyone needs a good smile from time to time. Being a dental assistant was a way to help each other.”

Breaking Barriers: How One Student Turned Adversity into Advocacy

Experiencing racial discrimination in the workplace was a defining moment for a UEI College West Covina student and finalist of the 2024 Be the Change Scholarship, Janerose Ngiri. This pivotal experience highlighted the persistent biases that often overshadow talent and hard work, shaping her perspective on the urgent need for equality and justice in professional and societal spaces.

Janerose's journey began with challenges that could have broken anyone's spirit. From leaving her home country due to tribal victimization to enduring over 20 years of immigration delays, she faced adversity at every turn. She used these struggles as a foundation for her resilience.

"Adversity became my stepping stone rather than a barrier," she shared. "I've learned to turn challenges into opportunities for growth."

Her workplace experiences were a wake-up call. Despite excelling at her job, Janerose encountered colleagues and managers who judged her race rather than her abilities. One manager was shocked to discover that she was not European, despite her impressive résumé.

The unspoken assumption was clear

to Janerose: Her skills and professional demeanor did not align with the biased expectations of someone from her background. These moments of injustice ignited her commitment to challenge systemic biases and foster equitable opportunities for all. "I've met individuals who saw my potential instead of my race," she reflected. "Their humility and fairness inspired me to emulate that in my own life."

Returning to school at UEI College has been transformative, offering her the skills she needs to succeed in medical billing and coding and the tools to advocate for change. She views her education as a platform to create tangible impact.

"In healthcare, I can push for equitable patient care and inclusive workplace practices," Janerose explained. "Systemic biases should never affect the quality of services provided."

The Be the Change Scholarship, which celebrates students advocating for racial equality, has amplified her voice. Through writing, public speaking, and community engagement, she aspires to inspire others to challenge stereotypes and create a fairer society.



"Sharing my story is a powerful way to encourage open dialogue about inequality," she said. "I want to empower others to rise above their circumstances."

Her vision for reducing workplace discrimination is both systemic and actionable. From bias training and diverse hiring panels to mentorship programs and data-driven monitoring, she advocates for clear, transparent measures to ensure equity. "Change starts with individuals who refuse to accept the status quo," she emphasized.

As Janerose continues her education and advocacy, she paves the way for a world where fairness and equality prevail.

"Adversity became my stepping stone rather than a barrier. I've learned to turn challenges into opportunities for growth."

Getting Her Smile Back



“Thank you to everyone at UEI. It was such an incredible investment in my life — emotionally, mentally, and professionally.”

For 14 years, Celeste Mackenzie believed she would never amount to anything. The emotional — and at times physical — abuse she endured in her relationship consumed her life.

“This person very methodically and systematically made sure I was left with nothing of myself,” she said. “I didn’t have confidence in anything anymore. Everything was, ‘You’re stupid. You’re dumb. You don’t know what you’re doing. You can’t do it.’ It was every day, and it was awful. I got to the point where I didn’t think I was worth anything or capable of doing anything.”

Although Celeste was conditioned to doubt herself, she never stopped believing in her daughters. When she noticed them being subjected to the same abuse, she made the decision to leave. For the first time, the voices telling her she couldn’t do anything were silenced. She had taken a bold step, and she knew the next challenge was getting her life on track with a new career. That’s when she discovered UEI College in Phoenix.

“I wanted to be able to do something, to provide for my children and myself, and to show them that even if people treat you terribly, you have the power to rise above it,” she said. “The experience at UEI was

amazing. I went in for a tour and ended up registering that same day.”

Initially uncertain about her career path, Celeste found her calling with the Dental Assistant (DA) program.

“For years, I lost my smile — physically and emotionally,” she shared. “I was devastated emotionally, but I also lost a tooth during that relationship. My front tooth was knocked out. Fixing it was a year-and-a-half-long process. Every time I visited the dentist or periodontist, they were so kind and gave me my smile back. Now, no one can tell I have a dental implant. When I saw the DA program, I knew that’s what I wanted to do — to help someone else regain their smile, no matter how small or big the impact.”

As Celeste immersed herself in her studies, it wasn’t just the technical skills she learned that left an impression. It was the encouragement and support she received from her classmates and instructors.

“School was extremely daunting at first,” she admitted. “But it didn’t take long for my classmates and teacher to change that. Every morning, I’d walk in and get a fist bump from someone. Being allowed to ask questions and answer them was empowering. Being

in an environment where I could learn and thrive helped rebuild my confidence. What amazed me the most was that people started coming to me for help. That motivated me even more to want to support others.”

At the end of her program, Celeste was honored to be chosen as Valedictorian for her campus’s graduation. In her speech, she encouraged her classmates to persevere.

“Confidence doesn’t come overnight, but it’s something you can build,” she said. “Start with one small thing at a time. Once you accomplish those things, no one can take them away from you. Each small victory adds up to a mountain that no one can tear down. That’s the biggest lesson I’ve learned: Those small steps create a mountain of your own making.”

Celeste also expressed her gratitude for UEI.

“Thank you to everyone at UEI. It was such an incredible investment in my life — emotionally, mentally, and professionally. It was a transformative experience, and I’ll never forget the people who supported me along the way.”

Instructor Assists Huntington Park Student Who Went into Labor on Campus

What started as a normal day quickly turned into a dramatic moment that Janet Osorio and her family and classmates won't soon forget.

Janet, a medical assistant student at UEI College in Huntington Park, was only a few months away from graduating when she experienced a life-changing event — delivering her baby unexpectedly while at the Huntington Park campus. Thankfully, an attentive instructor came to her aide.

Janet thought she might be pregnant, but she had no idea just how far along the pregnancy was. Her pregnancy was rare. Known as a cryptic pregnancy, it occurs when the typical symptoms of pregnancy are so mild that the woman does not realize she's pregnant until near labor. Janet had recently started to suspect that she might be pregnant and had an exam scheduled for the following week. While typical labor and childbirth can last for several hours and be very painful, cryptic pregnancies can also include very mild labor.

"I had just gone to the clinic that Monday and was supposed to get my first ultrasound the next week," Janet said. "I had no idea I was that far along."

She recalls meeting up with her sister Jennifer, who's also a student at UEI in the Criminal Justice program, when she got to the UEI campus that day. As they were walking into campus, Janet felt

moisture running down her legs and a sharp pain in her hips. She knows now, that is when her water broke. Jennifer, realizing something was wrong, helped her sister to the restroom. As they reached the bathroom, the situation took an unexpected turn. "I cleaned myself up and saw a little bit of blood. I was like, 'What the hell?'" Then, all of a sudden, I felt the baby coming," Janet said.

"I screamed," Janet remembers. "I was screaming. My sister was screaming, and Ms. Diaz was walking past the restroom. She came inside and asked, 'Is everything ok?'"

Yvonne Diaz, a medical assistant and medical office specialist instructor at UEI, jumped into action. "I took off my lab coat off and used it like a blanket as she gave birth to the baby," she said. "When he came out, he wasn't crying yet so I knew there was a problem. It was the umbilical cord."

"She saw the umbilical cord wrapped around the baby's neck, and she told me to take it off slowly while she held him," Janet explained. "If Ms. Diaz hadn't been there, I think my baby could have choked."

"Ms. Diaz told me, 'It's a boy!' and we started to cry." While Ms. Diaz assisted Janet, her sister Jennifer ran to get help. Staff called 911. Janet and her newborn were rushed to the hospital.

Baby Noah, born six weeks premature,

weighed only 4 pounds, 8 ounces at birth. He spent over a month in the NICU in the hospital but is now healthy and doing well. Janet quickly resumed her classes, determined to finish her education while balancing newfound motherhood. "I was joining Zoom classes from the hospital," she said. "I am so thankful for the instructors working with me to make up labs."

With the support of her family and friends, Janet intends to finish the Medical Assistant program and has her sights set on going into pediatrics when she graduates.

"I'm doing everything to build a better future especially now that Noah is here," she said.

Looking back on the experience, Janet is thankful for the support of her family, and especially Ms. Diaz. "I'm so grateful for her being there," Janet said. "If she wasn't there, I don't know what would have happened."

"I am passionate about my students. I never thought I would have to help deliver a baby on campus," Ms. Diaz said. "I am thankful that Janet and Noah are doing well. It was quite the miracle to welcome him into the world like that."



HVAC Student in Chula Vista Honored with Scholarship

Koi Calloway, an HVAC student at UEI College in Chula Vista, has experienced numerous life changes but one decision has been life-altering: enrolling in UEI's HVAC program. His path to UEI was not a straight line. He grew up in El Cajon and after graduating from high school, he first attended a private college in Tennessee for a year. There, he made new friends but found that the traditional four-year college route wasn't the right fit at the time. While he was away at college, his parents moved to Arkansas. So, when he decided to leave college, he joined them there. Koi worked various jobs in Arkansas, before realizing he needed a new direction.

After seven years in Arkansas, with a lot of prayer and determination, Koi returned to California, driven by a mix of his faith, the desire for a fresh start, and to reconnect with his long-time girlfriend. "I had this overwhelming feeling of needing to make a change. It was like a divine intervention," he said.

Then came UEI College. "I didn't know what HVAC was at the time, but when UEI told me about their programs, I decided to give it a try — and I'm so glad I did," he said.

Since enrolling in the program, Koi has flourished, not just as a student but also as a student ambassador at the campus, guiding and helping others.

"Honestly, the decision to join UEI wasn't something I had planned—it just kind of happened. But I'm really glad it did," Koi said. "At first, I was worried about money and how I'd make it work, but when I stayed true to myself and kept trying my best, other people noticed."

In yet another twist of fate, Koi earned a scholarship thanks to his hard work and authenticity. "I never expected to win a scholarship," he said. "The staff in the office saw something in me and encouraged me to apply for a scholarship.



That's how supportive everyone is here. They want to see you succeed, and they give you the tools to do that."

Koi was selected as one of the recipients for a CAPPS General Scholarship from the California Foundation for Private & Postsecondary Schools. UEI College is a member of CAPPS.

"Koi is a very positive student who always strives to bring a smile to everyone he is around. Despite at times struggling to make ends meet himself, he never hesitates to help someone in need," said Elizabeth Sedano, student finance advisor at UEI Chula Vista. "He is the type of person we need more of in this world and a perfect example of a great UEI student maintaining good grades and attendance to better himself and his living situation. Truly someone to be proud of and deserving of the scholarship."

"I am beyond grateful for everything. UEI has been such a great place for

me. I've met amazing people, learned more than I ever thought possible, and the hands-on experience in HVAC has been incredible," Koi said. "It's just so satisfying to take something apart, figure out what's wrong, and then put it back together. I've always loved doing that."

With graduation on the horizon and a job in the HVAC field in his sights, Koi is optimistic about his future. He credits UEI with providing the practical skills he needs to succeed and a supportive community that helped him grow.

"This program has given me the confidence to go after what I want in life. Once I land a job, I'm planning to start building the new future with my girlfriend," he said.

Oceanside Instructor Honored with Veteran Service Award

California Assemblywoman Laurie Davies, vice chair of the California Assembly Military Affairs Committee, recently honored UEI College Oceanside instructor Juan Laguna with an Excellence in Mentorship award at the 2024 Veterans and Service Member Awards. The recognition, presented during a December ceremony at the Veterans Association of North County (VANC), highlights Juan's dedication to mentoring military veteran students both at UEI College and in the broader community. A longtime volunteer at VANC, Juan has been actively supporting veterans since 2021.

Juan, a 22-year veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps, served as an Infantry Operations Chief at Camp Pendleton before retiring from active duty. Following his military service, he pursued his education at UEI College, completing three programs, including Criminal

Justice. In 2024, he returned to UEI — this time as an instructor — where he now teaches criminal justice, mentors veteran students, and oversees the campus VA programs.

"I wasn't sure what I wanted to do with my life after serving in the Marine Corps, but then I found UEI College," Juan shared. "I'm really grateful to UEI. This has become like my family. Everyone here cares deeply about students and their success."

At UEI's Oceanside campus, Juan plays a vital role in helping veteran students navigate the transition to civilian life, including utilizing their G.I. Bill benefits and finding a new sense of purpose after military service.

Oceanside Executive Director Jaclyn Marquez praised Juan's contributions, saying, "I am thrilled that Juan was recognized with this honor. It is certainly well deserved. He has made an indelible



impact on the lives of veteran students at UEI, and we are incredibly proud to have him as part of our team."

Juan's story is a testament to the power of mentorship, service, and second careers. His journey from Marine Corps veteran to UEI student and now instructor exemplifies the kind of lifelong dedication to education and service that the Excellence in Mentorship award seeks to honor.

Garden Grove Dental Assistant Student Leads by Example, Earns Scholarship

Shemaiah Javillonar's story is one of perseverance, resilience, and passion. A dedicated student in the Dental Assistant (DA) program at UEI College in Garden Grove, she has overcome significant challenges to reach where she is today. From immigrating to the U.S. from the Philippines as a child to serving in the U.S. Army for a decade, each phase of Shemaiah's life has shaped her commitment to achieving success.

Shemaiah's initial career path wasn't always directed toward dentistry. She began her educational journey studying kinesiology, but the field didn't resonate with her. However, her family, many of whom work in the dental field,

encouraged her to consider a path in dentistry. Though she was initially not sure if she would like it, Shemaiah found her true calling after starting the dental assisting program at UEI. "I didn't think I wanted to be in dental, but after trying out the UEI program, I thought, 'Wow, this is so hands-on. I feel so confident about it,'" she said.

Beyond her growing interest in the field, Shemaiah's military background played a key role in shaping her mindset and work ethic. After graduating from high school, she enlisted in the U.S. Army, where she has served for 10 years, earning the rank of sergeant. During her service, Shemaiah developed critical life

skills, including leadership, discipline, and confidence, all of which she applied to her education at UEI.

"The military taught me how to be confident and take risks," she said. "I got to travel, meet so many people, and it helped me realize what my goals are."

Shemaiah's journey at UEI has not been without obstacles. While excelling academically, she also dealt with personal hardships. Working full-time and attending UEI, Shemaiah had to carefully balance her schedule to stay on top of her studies. She credited the support of UEI instructors, particularly her Dental Assistant Instructor Martha Flores, for helping her stay focused.

“Shemaiah faced challenges that would’ve made others stop, but she didn’t,” said Ms. Flores. “She’s a fantastic student and role model.”

Ms. Flores’ encouragement helped Shemaiah push through the tough times, giving her the confidence to succeed. “She’s the reason why I’m here,” Shemaiah said. “I’m confident in what I want to do because of her.”

Shemaiah’s hard work and determination paid off when she was selected for the Dr. Carolyn Ghazal Dental Assistant Scholarship from the Pacific Dental Services Foundation (PDSF), which is given to those who have a heart for service and mentorship in the dental field. This prestigious scholarship was awarded to Shemaiah in recognition of her determination to excel in the dental field and her dedication to her education. The scholarship gives up to \$5,000 in tuition assistance and includes mentorship opportunities to students

who demonstrate leadership, service, and a passion for the dental profession. Since its creation, PDSF has awarded over \$1.7 million in scholarships to more than 300 dental assistant students.

“I heard about the scholarship and decided to apply because I could really use it,” Shemaiah explained. “The scholarship has been a life-changing opportunity for me, and I am extremely grateful that they picked me.”

“It actually brought tears to my eyes to see her get the scholarship, knowing everything she went through with her personal life,” Ms. Flores said. “I am very, very proud of her.”

Looking back on her journey, Shemaiah reflects on the sacrifices she’s made and the lessons she’s learned along the way. “Temporary sacrifices lead to permanent careers,” she said. “Every morning, I told myself, ‘This is just one step closer to where I want to be.’ Now, eight months later, I’m here graduating.”

As she prepares for the next chapter in her life, Shemaiah is incredibly grateful for the support she has received—from her family, her instructors, and the Pacific Dental Services Foundation. “Thank you so much. I’m very grateful,” she said. “When you don’t have much, you’re grateful for even the smallest things. This wasn’t small; this was huge for me. I’ll never forget the support I received, and it’s something that will help me in my career and my life.”

Shemaiah plans to further her education after graduating from UEI and become a dental hygienist after gaining experience as a registered dental assistant (RDA). Her long-term commitment to her education and passion for the dental field serves as an inspiration to others. “I know I can do this,” she said, filled with confidence for the future.



The Heart of a Teacher: Meet Louie Lopez



Louie Lopez always grew up in and around the HVAC industry but after more than 30 years working in the field, he found his true calling in the classroom at UEI College in Fresno.

“When I came to UEI five years ago, I knew I loved being on a roof,” he said. “I was always the guy who trained the new guy or helped out the new guy but when it came to education I thought, ‘Wow, this is what my calling is. To have patience, to teach, to show someone how to work on all these different types of systems.’ It’s now a passion of mine, to teach. I feel like I’ve always been a teacher at heart and always been able to teach people things. I’m also teachable as well, which is a big thing.”

His family owned an air conditioning business, and he has always enjoyed helping customers feel comfortable in their home or business. It’s that knowledge and experience he now enjoys passing on to students at UEI Fresno.

“Here at UEI College we keep things relevant to what the industry is asking for these days with a lot of hands-on training,” he said. “Because the industry

is changing so much, we keep up with the changes that are happening. We are a big hands-on training school. It’s all about getting our kids’ hands dirty.”

Louie’s pride for the program at UEI shows on his face. He’s proud of the four labs on campus that walk students through basic residential HVAC, all the way to commercial and industrial equipment. All of the tools and equipment are running at peak performance and if they are not, it’s an opportunity for students to practice their skills.

It’s also a point of pride that as many as half of the instructors at UEI Fresno are former students who, after working in the field for several years, have returned to teach.

“Our instructors are well trained and come from all walks of life and all HVAC industries,” Louie said. “They are patient and they care. It’s all about student success for our instructors.”

The most important skills Louie likes to teach his students are not the technical skills, but the soft skills, striking the balance between being a good technician and a good person.

“Those are the skills you don’t see in a book,” Louie said. “It’s manners. At a customer’s house do you walk through the grass or around the grass? Do you park in the driveway or on the street? Soft skills are so important. Saying ‘thank you’, ‘yes sir’, being courteous. When you walk into someone’s home to fix something, you have to respect that they are not comfortable and you have to make them comfortable. Soft skills are really big for us at UEI.”

For those looking to join the HVAC industry, it takes the right combination of soft skills, technical skills, and a desire to keep learning. That desire has always led Louie and he’s passionate about sharing it with students today and in the future.

“HVAC changed my life and helped me get through my challenges in life,” he said. “I’m a product of trade schools. Our curriculum is always being updated and changed because our industry is always changing. That’s what keeps our students hungry and able to find jobs after they leave here.”

Instructor Leads Donation Effort for Students Impacted by LA Fires

As wildfires swept through the Los Angeles area in January, affecting numerous students at UEI College's seven LA-area campuses, one instructor stepped up to make a difference. Medical Assistant Instructor James Cardiel of UEI College's West Covina campus took the lead in organizing a donation drive to support those impacted by the devastation. Thanks to his efforts, and the generosity of the UEI community, hundreds of essential items — including clothing, blankets, diapers, toiletries, and food — were collected to help impacted students and their families in need.

"The response was overwhelming. Thanks to the generosity of the UEI College West Covina community, hundreds of essential items were collected. In addition, local supporters donated \$150 gift cards to provide further assistance to those in need," said West Covina Campus President Gregory Falcon.

Students affected by the wildfires were able to select donated items to help their families. Remaining supplies were then delivered to the Salvation Army's Covina branch, ensuring that even more wildfire victims could benefit from the



outpouring of support.

"I want to thank the administration team for approving this event, and all the volunteers, instructors, and students for helping volunteer their time and donated items," Mr. Cardiel said. "We have made a meaningful and positive contribution to supporting the victims of the fires in

our community."

"The efforts of Mr. Cardiel and the entire UEI College West Covina campus highlight the power of community, compassion, and action in times of crisis. Thank you to everyone who contributed. Your generosity made a real difference," Mr. Falcon said.

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HVAC Career Fair at UEI College in Fresno Opens Doors for Future Technicians

When Fresno's summer temperatures soar into triple digits, air conditioning is a necessity, making skilled HVAC technicians essential. But even beyond the heat, demand for trained professionals in the Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) industry remains high year-round, offering strong career opportunities.

In January, UEI College in Fresno hosted an HVAC Career Fair connecting students, graduates, and local employers. Nearly a dozen HVAC companies attended, actively recruiting skilled workers and conducting on-the-spot interviews.

"We host these career fairs to give our students every opportunity to succeed," said Louie Lopez, Chair of the Skilled Trades Programs at UEI College, Fresno. "The HVAC industry is always in need of trained professionals, and events like this connect our students and graduates directly with companies looking to hire right now."

Employers at the fair emphasized the industry's growing demand. Lance Adams, General Manager of Allbritten, a local HVAC, electrical, and plumbing company, noted, "We're gearing up for the busy summer season, and I have several open HVAC positions I'm recruiting for today. UEI College is a



very reputable school. One of our best employees is now an instructor here, and we currently employ two recent UEI graduates — they've been great."

Other employers echoed similar experiences. Edna Pearson from The Alvarado Group shared, "We've hired several UEI graduates, and three of them are working for us right now. In fact, our HVAC manager is a UEI graduate, and he's fantastic."

Brad Melton, President of JC Melton Air Conditioning, emphasized the

career's rewards. "I've been in HVAC for almost 40 years, and it's a very rewarding field. It's great for those who like working with their hands, and there's no shortage of work — especially in Fresno's hot summers."

Melton has seen success in hiring UEI graduates. "They come in with a strong foundation. I've already collected a stack of applications and conducted several interviews. The challenge now is deciding who to hire."

"The HVAC industry is always in need of trained professionals, and events like this connect our students and graduates directly with companies looking to hire right now."

Angel Hernandez, founder of Costless Heating, Plumbing, and Air Conditioning, agreed. “I’ve hired a lot of UEI grads because they come in with the basic knowledge we need, allowing us to train them to fit our operations.”

Diego Tapetillo, a 2023 UEI HVAC graduate now working at Costless, attended the career fair to help recruit. “UEI was the perfect stepping stone into my career. The instructors provided hands-on learning, and I wouldn’t be in HVAC without them.”

For graduates like Mason Cornelius, the event was an invaluable opportunity. “At UEI, I hit the ground running because the instructors provided us with hands-on experience. Today’s fair lets me meet directly with companies I’m interested in. It’s fantastic that UEI does this.”

Since launching its HVAC program a decade ago, UEI College has graduated more than 800 students, many now working in the industry. The HVAC Career Fair is just one way the college continues to support students beyond the classroom, providing career placement assistance, resume-building support, and interview coaching to help graduates secure employment.



“At UEI, I hit the ground running because the instructors provided us with hands-on experience. Today’s fair lets me meet directly with companies I’m interested in. It’s fantastic that UEI does this.”



UEI College Strengthens Community Ties with Free Car Care Events

UEI College continues to make a lasting impact on communities in California by hosting free Community Car Care events at multiple campuses, including Oceanside and Bakersfield. These events, led by students and instructors from UEI's Automotive Technician program alongside local automotive professionals, provide free 14-point vehicle inspections and offer critical maintenance recommendations to help ensure more reliable transportation for residents.

The 2nd annual Community Car Care event at UEI College in Oceanside saw an increase in community participation compared to last year. UEI College in Bakersfield followed suit with its own event in November, reinforcing UEI College's dedication to hands-on learning and community service.

Both events featured essential vehicle inspections, including checks on brakes, suspension, steering, fluid levels, and battery condition. Additionally, maintenance tips were offered, ensuring families had the resources to keep their vehicles safe.

Beyond providing free inspections, the events also showcased the growing need for skilled automotive technicians. According to data from the California Employment Development Department, in Kern County alone, more than 350 new automotive technicians are needed annually to meet industry demand. UEI's Automotive Technician training program can be completed in as few as 9 months.

"Our goal is not just to train the next generation of automotive technicians, but to instill a sense of responsibility and service," said Adam Lossing, automotive program chair. "These events are a perfect example of how our students apply their skills to give back to the community while gaining real-world experience. It's a win-win — our students get hands-on training, and local families receive valuable vehicle care."

As the demand for skilled trades professionals continues to grow, UEI College remains committed to providing career-focused education that not only benefits its students but also strengthens the communities it serves.

Watch the TV News Stories on YouTube!

Both Community Car Care events were covered by local news stations. Check out UEI's YouTube channel to see the stories at www.youtube.com/@UEI.

Spreading Warmth and Holiday Cheer: UEI Fresno Medical Assistant Students Make a Difference

In December, Medical Assistant students in Erika Razzo's classes at UEI College in Fresno — with support from Associate Director of Student Services Matthew Carter — demonstrated the true spirit of the season by organizing a heartfelt service-learning project. The students collected and donated brand-new blankets for senior citizens at the Nazareth House Senior Living Community, bringing both warmth and smiles to the residents.

As part of this meaningful outreach, the class hand-delivered a blanket to each recipient during a festive holiday party hosted at the nursing home. Beyond sharing thoughtful gifts, the students also conducted vital sign screenings for the residents, showcasing their growing medical skills and commitment to community care.

"The seniors expressed joy and gratitude for the blankets, the company of cheerful visitors, and the holiday treats shared during the event," said Fresno Campus President Ada Clower. "I am so proud of our students and faculty. This incredible effort not only brightened the day for the residents but also provided the students with valuable hands-on experience and a deeper understanding of the importance of compassion in healthcare. Kudos to Mr. Carter, Ms. Razzo and the students for making a positive impact and embodying the values of UEI College."



COMMUNITY IMPACT



UEI OCEANSIDE



UEI GARDEN GROVE

Oceanside Campus Hosts Community Vaccine Clinic

UEI College in Oceanside recently partnered with the nonprofit Champions of Health to host a special vaccine and health screening clinic on campus, providing vital healthcare services to the local community. During the event, both students and community members received free flu shots and COVID-19 vaccines, helping to promote wellness and disease prevention.

Medical assistant students took an active role in the clinic, volunteering to perform health screenings, including checking vital signs and eyesight. This service-learning opportunity allowed students to gain valuable hands-on experience in a real-world healthcare setting while making a meaningful impact in the community. By applying their skills in a live clinical environment, students reinforced their training, built confidence, and developed a deeper understanding of patient care. Events like these highlight UEI College's commitment to preparing students for successful careers while fostering a spirit of service and community engagement.

Garden Grove Instructor Leads Effort to Honor Heroes

Dr. Charles Cunha, an instructor at UEI College Garden Grove, led a dedicated group of UEI students and staff in the 9/11 Heroes Run on September 11 2024, supporting the Travis Manion Foundation (TMF). This meaningful event honors the legacy of fallen heroes while raising awareness and funds for programs that empower veterans and the families of the fallen.

Founded in memory of U.S. Marine 1st Lt. Travis Manion, TMF is committed to fostering leadership and service through its Character Does Matter program, where military veterans and surviving family members mentor young people, instilling values of integrity, courage, and personal responsibility.

Beyond the 9/11 Heroes Run, TMF hosts impactful year-round initiatives, including Legacy Projects, which focus on community service efforts such as beautification projects and providing support to the elderly and homeless. TMF also offers an annual scholarship for high school seniors who have demonstrated a strong commitment to leadership and volunteerism, ensuring the next generation carries forward the spirit of service and sacrifice. Dr. Cunha's leadership and UEI College's participation in the 9/11 Heroes Run exemplifies a commitment to community engagement and honoring those who serve.

UEI Campus Locations

United Education Institute has five campuses located in Georgia, Nevada, Texas, and New Mexico, and UEI College has 16 campuses located in California, Arizona, and Washington.

UNITED EDUCATION INSTITUTE LOCATIONS

Albuquerque

885 Sunset Road SW
Albuquerque, NM 87105
(505) 835-7099

Dallas

1050 North Westmoreland Road
Dallas, TX 752119
(945) 910-2102

Las Vegas

3450 S. Maryland Pkwy
Las Vegas, NV 89109
(725) 210-7098

Morrow

1564 Southlake Pkwy
Morrow, GA 30260
(678) 902-6440

Stone Mountain

971 N Hairston Rd
Stone Mountain, GA 30083
(470) 741-2444

UEI COLLEGE LOCATIONS

Bakersfield

3737 Rosedale Hwy
Bakersfield, CA 93308
(661) 846-2244

Gardena

661 W Redondo Beach Blvd
Gardena, CA 90247
(424) 286-9990

Ontario

4730 Ontario Mills Pkwy
Ontario, CA 91764
(909) 581-9756

Sacramento

4424 Florin Rd, Ste. D
Sacramento, CA 95823
(916) 562-1927

Chula Vista

1261 3rd Ave, Ste. A
Chula Vista, CA 91911
(619) 739-4643

Huntington Park

6055 Pacific Blvd
Huntington Park, CA 90255
(323) 457-6630

Phoenix

9215 N. Black Canyon Hwy
Phoenix, AZ 85021
(623) 226-7300

Stockton

4994 Claremont Ave
Stockton, CA 95207
(209) 662-6310

Fresno

3602 N. Blackstone Ave, Ste. 268
Fresno, CA 93726
(559) 761-1442

Mesa

1420 W. Southern Ave
Mesa, AZ 85202
(480) 885-8949

Reseda

18040 Sherman Way
Reseda, CA 91335
(818) 650-1800

Tacoma

1415 E. 72nd St.
Tacoma, WA 98404
(253) 210-3590

Garden Grove

10870 Katella Ave
Garden Grove, CA 92840
(657) 284-1400

Oceanside

2027 Mission Ave
Oceanside, CA 92058
(760) 670-4842

Riverside

1860 University Ave
Riverside, CA 92507
(951) 394-0550

West Covina

339 N. Azusa Ave
West Covina, CA 91791
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CELEBRATING OUR GRADUATES!

UEI campuses celebrated graduates with ceremonies across the country in the fall and over the winter. Congratulations Class of 2024 and 2025!

