

Latino/Diversity Day Draws 500 Students from N.J. High Schools to Stockton

Students See Campus Life, Learn About Opportunities

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Galloway, NJ - About 500 Latino and other minority students and their guidance counselors from high schools in Atlantic, Camden, Union and Passaic counties today heard about the importance of getting a degree from two Stockton administrators who came from backgrounds like theirs and were the first in their families to go to college.

"I came from Camden City," said Heather Medina, assistant director of Admissions, who organized Latino Visitation and Diversity Day at Stockton University. "I g1.93adu(at)-6.ed Qoe(83004E Twdu(at) 'was not college material.'"

That made her angry, she said, and also made her realize she wasn't showing her true capabilities. Determined to prove that guidance counselor wrong, she started at Stockton through the Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) program and earned her undergraduate degree in Marketing.

"I didn't let my past dictate my future," said Medina, who went on to earn a master's degree at Stockton.

"It doesn't matter how you start. It's about how you finish," she told the students. "You are here today because someone believes in you."

Thomasa Gonzalez, vice president for Student Affairs, told the students her family came to Newark, N.J. in the 1960s from Puerto Rico, and had no experience with the government, public education

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“I was the first one in my family to go to college,” she said. “It’s my input that you should give college consideration. You will not get anywhere if you don’t put in an application.”

She noted that people who go to college make more money, and gain experience and knowledge that make them better citizens and more able to serve their families and communities.

Students from Absegami, Cedar Creek, Egg Harbor Township, Oakcrest and Pleasantville high schools in Atlantic County; Camden County’s Promise Charter School, Champ/Gear Up, Upward Bound for English Language Learners and Woodrow Wilson and the LEAP Academy, Passaic High School in Passaic County and Plainfield High School in Union County attended.

Many Latino students in southern New Jersey would be the first in their families to go to college. Stockton has held Latino Visitation Day since 1987, and the program has grown over the years. This fall, 12.8 percent of Stockton’s 8,728 students identify as Hispanic/Latino.

Some of the students in attendance shared their hopes for their future.

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whether or not college is right for you