



# SAEP ALUMNI

The impact of the San Antonio Education Partnership



## Cindy Estrella

MacArthur High School 2015; University of the Incarnate Word 2019

*The first word that comes to mind when thinking of Cindy Estrella is, “grateful”. She speaks nothing but gratitude for her family, teachers, advisors, and all those who helped guide her during her journey to college. She is also grateful for her students, for her opportunities, and for the work that she is able to do.*

Cindy is a graduate of MacArthur High School, and recipient of the San Antonio Education Partnership Scholarship. Her journey to college is one that may not have been experienced by all, but is so familiar to many of our students. She was born and raised in Mexico, moving over to San Antonio at the age of 10. There was a lot of culture shock, and a language barrier. But with the help of her family and school programs, she was able to learn and master English within a few years and become more comfortable in her new home.

In Elementary school, one of her teachers introduced her to AVID, and she remained in that program until her high school graduation. AVID gave Cindy the opportunity to see college as an option. In high school, as AVID helped her with the college application process, Cindy turned to her SAEP Advisor and her Trinity University College Advising Corps Advisor to help with the financial aid and scholarship process. Cindy has a sister who is two years older who also utilized these resources in her senior year. So, she was already aware of the help that these advisors could provide, including the SAEP Scholarship. Her AVID teacher also encouraged students to apply for the scholarship resource.

She remembers working with her SAEP Advisor, Eric Apaez, on essay revision and scholarship searches, and going to cafécollege for seminars and additional advising. Cindy said about senior year. As time grew closer to the end of the year, she committed to the University of the Incarnate Word and began her next chapter. She started college with 28 credit hours from dual credit, and despite having a major in Biochemistry while also doing a minor in Criminal Justice, she was able to graduate in three years.

*Cindy spoke about her experience with her experience with SAEP and her Advisor.*

*“I’ve always had a lot of people who have helped me, and now that I’m on the other side I’m grateful that he was there from the beginning. I have a picture of us from my graduation, and the fact that he was there to support me when I started and then seeing him at the end of my high school career was helpful. A lot of times student’s just need to be next to someone to feel that comfort of ‘you got this’. I’m grateful that an organization like SAEP is so full and committed to giving back to the community. Being part of SAEP as a student, and seeing the cycle, it’s what the organization stands for. It comes down to the individual relaying that message to the student. Working with an SAEP Advisor as a colleague now, I see the passion the organization and staff have for giving back.”*

*When asked what words she would give to a student who is starting their college journey, she said the following:*

*“Don’t be afraid to ask for help. Have confidence in knowing that you deserve better, and that you deserve to be at a university like everyone else in your graduating class. Apply to as many scholarships and universities as you can, don’t limit yourself. Students don’t always know about the resources available to them, so don’t be afraid to ask. Know that people are there to help out and give you the information to help you reach your goal. If you are a first-generation student, you are not alone. So many people are going through the same thing. Break out of your shell.”*

Cindy is grateful for her family, friends, and faith because they not only supported her through her educational journey but have also made her a better person and college advisor. She is passionate about serving her community, and let her students know the resources and opportunities they have available to them. She shares her story with her students because, **“When you go through a path you chose to go through, it opens a path for other students to do the same.”**

