



# NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Santa Ana College Student Duy Le Receives National Recognition *\*From Limited English Skills to Accomplished Scholar in 54 Months\****

(Santa Ana)—Santa Ana College student Duy Le recently received national recognition as one of the top 20 community college scholars in the United States when Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) named him a Guistwhite Scholar. Le, a Santa Ana resident, was honored during PTK's annual convention in Nashville. PTK, a national honorary society, recognizes and encourages the academic achievement of two-year college students.

Guistwhite Scholars are selected based on academic achievement, leadership accomplishment, and engagement in PTK programs. An independent panel of judges selected the 19-year-old biochemistry major with a 4.0 grade point average from more than 2,240 applicants. Each Guistwhite Scholar receives a \$5,000 scholarship for baccalaureate studies along with a commemorative medal.

But the accolades don't stop there. Earlier in the spring, Le was named a 2012 Coca-Cola Community College All-California Academic Team Gold Scholar. The Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation sponsors the Coca-Cola Community College Academic Team program by recognizing 50 Gold, 50 Silver and 50 Bronze Scholars nationwide. This honor comes with a \$1,500 scholarship and a special medallion.

A native of Vietnam, Le immigrated to the United States with his mother less than five years ago. According to Le, he had studied some English in his home country, but he spoke with an accent and had problems with colloquial English and understanding rapid speech. He remembers how difficult his first year of American school was at La Quinta High School in Westminster. Nevertheless, he persevered, graduated high school, and found his way to Santa Ana College (SAC) in August 2010.

At SAC, counselors and professors encouraged him to get involved in campus activities and to apply himself academically. And he took the advice to heart! So much so that he regrets not having enough time for himself and his family.

In addition to tackling a full load of honor classes, he has devoted himself to helping other students as a math tutor. In the Math Center, he helps facilitate workshops focusing on varying

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mathematical challenges.

With his many classes and activities, Le is often on campus from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. He has participated in the Associated Student Government as a senator for math and science, served on the Advisory Board for SAC's Student Leadership Institute, and helped organize activities for Women's History and Black History Months. He began attending Phi Theta Kappa meetings even before he could be a member. As if his on-campus endeavors were not enough, he has also volunteered at a Vietnamese cultural center to help teach 10- to 12-year-olds about the Vietnamese language and culture.

"One of the most challenging things is having enough time. Sometimes I feel a little overwhelmed," said Le. "I'm used to being on campus 12 hours a day. Balancing all my activities challenges my time management ability, but I realize that I have become a leader by taking the initiative."

Every once in a while, he indulges in what he considers a guilty pleasure. He might watch a movie or one of his favorite television shows Glee or Modern Family, but not for long.

Le says his inspiration is his mother. "She always believes in me. I want to be my best academically for her."

During his years at SAC, which actually started when he was in high school when he took college classes over the summer, he has learned to how to dedicate himself to reaching his goals. His motto is, "Be positive; be ambitious." Even as students find it harder to register for the classes they may want or need due to reduced class availability, he has learned to be flexible, get on the waiting list, and be persistent about following his dreams.

He plans on transferring to the University of California, Berkeley, in the fall to pursue a Ph.D. in biology. He's also not sure if he'll major in microbiology or neurobiology, but he does know he's ready for the next phase of his journey.

**About the Rancho Santiago Community College District**

*The mission of the Rancho Santiago Community College District (RSCCD) is to respond to the educational needs of an ever-changing community and to provide programs and services that reflect academic excellence. Santa Ana College and Santiago Canyon College are public community colleges of RSCCD, which serve the residents of Anaheim Hills, East Garden Grove, Irvine, Orange, Santa Ana, Tustin and Villa Park. Both colleges provide education for academic transfer and careers, courses for personal and professional development, customized training for business and industry, and programs to train nurses, firefighters and law enforcement personnel.*

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