

# The Santa Ana College President's Circle Success Story

## Jayson in his own words:



My name is Jayson Nickle. I am a recent graduate from Santa Ana College with both an AA and AS degree. I am also an honored recipient of the Southern California Edison Fire Technology Program Scholarship.

I come from a blue-collar family. My dad never graduated high school and is a successful heavy machinery mechanic, and my mom never attended college. My parents always stressed to me the value of education, but like most kids, I simply was not a receptive listener. I moved out of their house my senior year to live with my friends only a few blocks from downtown Huntington Beach where I worked my way up at a local restaurant from bus boy, to manager, and eventually head bartender. The money was great and so was being able to sleep in until noon every day. This lifestyle was perfect for a young California kid but it was not fulfilling. At the age of 25, my best friend since elementary school, James Lavigne, sat me down for a heart-to-heart talk.

James had beat cancer, found his passion in Culinary School, and recently landed his first chef position. He told me how he wanted me to find my passion and joy in life. He told me life is too short to concern yourself with money and partying. He knew that it had been my lifelong dream to become a firefighter. I had never really pursued this dream or even looked into how I would enter into this field. Unfortunately, only a few days after this conversation, James sadly passed away. His passing seemed to only prove his point that life is too short to not pursue your dreams.

Shortly after his passing, I took the biggest risk of my life. I quit my job and enrolled in a private EMT program as well as Santa Ana College. In a short five weeks, I went from slinging rum and cokes, to administering CPR and delivering babies in a 9-1-1 system with CARE ambulance. I was fortunate enough to make great connections with the staff at Santa Ana College who connected me to different mentors and opportunities. Captain Muir, for example, helped me to find the Reserve Program through OCFA where I am happy to say I have risen to the rank of Captain. I am helping mentor new and excited reserves to prepare them for a career in firefighting. I did all of this while completing my education at SAC with a 4.0 in all Fire Tech classes and a 3.9 in all other classes, graduating with highest honors and being inducted into the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society.

Recently I was able to complete my Paramedic training and am happy to be working to save lives every day working as an Emergency Services Paramedic. The financial and emotional support I have received at Santa Ana College means more to me than words can express. Receiving such an esteemed scholarship is a validation that the risk I took was worthwhile, and proof that James was right to believe in me. I am blessed to stand before you a very proud Santa Ana College Alumni, Firefighter, and Paramedic who is working ever closer to his dream of becoming a career firefighter. I know that if it were not for my time at Santa Ana College none of these dreams would have been realized and my path would have been a lot different. Humbly, I say from the bottom of my heart, thank you for allowing me to thrive, realize my dream, and make James proud!