

# Digital Bridge Academy Receives \$1M Hewlett Grant

*Training for Statewide Implementation is Far Ahead of Schedule*

**A** \$1 million dollar gift received from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation will support statewide implementation of the Cabrillo College Digital Bridge Academy (DBA), an innovative pilot project that introduces college-level curriculum to an adult population that is not traditionally college-bound. It is the largest foundation gift of its kind received by the Cabrillo College Foundation and will help support statewide implementation of the curriculum.

Since the program was founded in 2003 by Diego James Navarro, a former high tech executive, about 240 at-risk students have participated. An unusually high number have continued with college. The DBA, launched at the Watsonville campus and expanded this fall to the main Aptos campus, involves an initial bridge semester of accelerated, intensive basic skills learning.

Martha Naranjo, 22, who struggled in high school and almost didn't graduate, had given up hope of college when she decided to sign up for the DBA for lack of a better plan.

"I don't know why or how, but in that short period of time I felt like staying in school,"



*Martha Naranjo*

Naranjo said. "I actually felt like I was someone. I learned how to value myself, how much there is to do in life, how to have a vision and imagine yourself doing something you've never done before. Something woke me up." Naranjo completed a two-year degree and transferred this fall to San Jose State University where she plans to eventually earn a master's degree in

*"Our real hope is that we can help reclaim and reconnect students with what they're capable of doing. Martha will come back and have a great impact in the community."*

**—Diego James Navarro**  
*Director,  
Digital Bridge Academy*

social work. She is the first in her family to attend a four-year university.

With the help of National Science Foundation grants, Navarro is also developing a two-semester program with a stronger emphasis on math and science. Four colleges have begun implementing the program and both Hartnell College and the Los Angeles Community College District are next in line.

Other donors to Digital Bridge Academy include the James Irvine Foundation, the Walter S. Johnson Foundation, and the David and Lucile Packard Foundation.