

Digital Bridge Academy Lights a New Path for Local Student

Rapidly Growing Program Receives \$900K from the Hewlett Foundation



Carlos Anaya was helping his family by working as a migrant education teacher's assistant when he saw a flyer about the Digital Bridge Academy, a rapidly growing model program for the inspira-

tion, preparation and retention of nontraditional community college students.

"I just wanted to get an AA and start working," he said. "A lot of my friends had nice cars. Getting \$10 an hour was a big deal."

Instead, Carlos, 24, graduated from Cabrillo College, and went on to earn a bachelor's degree this year from California State University of Monterey Bay in Collaborative Health and Human Services.

In DBA, which has garnered increasing national attention since its inception in 2002, a diverse group of students gain a new understanding of their personal learning styles. There are social justice papers, training in team management and group dynamics, and mind-body movement classes.

Diego Navarro, a former businessman who launched the program at Cabrillo College has been actively engaged in expanding it to other community colleges. Cabrillo staff and faculty have played a major role in the success and expansion of the DBA.



(first row) Craig Hayward, Adela Najarro, Renée Kilmer. (second row) Wanda Garner, Victoria Lewis. (third row) Melinda Silverstein and Rock Pfothenhauer. Not pictured: Victoria Bañales, Kathy Cowan, Nancy Fetterman, Geneffa Jonker, Diego Navarro, Diane Putnam, Conrad Scott-Curtis, and James Weckler.

Last summer, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation awarded DBA a \$900,000 grant to help meet the growing demand for the program throughout the state. Another \$2,700,000 grant is pending from a private foundation for this effort. The grants will help fund a two-year effort to further develop and implement the DBA Intensive Acceleration Model at Cabrillo College, Hartnell College and three other community colleges. DBA will pilot a bridge semester that combines its foundation course with accelerated English and math studies. An estimated 1,440 at-risk community college students will have the opportunity to emerge from remedial course work in four semesters.

"DBA made me see education through a different lens," Carlos said. "It wasn't just about sitting in class but about working together. We were connecting with each other, having dinner and study groups together. We were a family. When I finished with the program I was more prepared to go on."

Carlos is currently working as a group supervisor for the Santa Cruz County Probation Department and volunteering at Women's Crisis Support. He intends to pursue a master's degree in social work or clinical psychology.