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PERSONAL
ENRICHMENT

Discover your potential

Local community colleges provide a wealth of possibilities.

BY ALI DORRI



Two 19 year olds are taking their colleges by storm, mixing presidential politics with work, studying for careers, and having fun. Taylor Ames, president of Saddleback College Associated Student Government, and Nina Nawabi, president of Irvine Valley College Associated Students, are living every moment while keeping an eye on their exciting futures.

Taylor Ames

An idea popped into her head, and one month later it became the call to action for Orange County students. Taylor's "The Next Step" slogan was adopted by South Orange County Community College District for its marketing campaign targeted at 18 to 22 year old potential students. The slogan made its way into thousands of Orange County homes, movie theaters, newspapers, radio airwaves, brochures and was printed on t-shirts and beach balls.

Taylor is just happy to help her peers find out about college and wants to make sure they take that very important next step. "Students want to be in a place that's fun and unique, and that's when it occurred to me - Saddleback is a fun place!"

Along with her presidential duties, the sophomore theater arts major holds down 19 units and a part time job. She recently played the role of a prostitute in the theater version of the 1782 French novel *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, which played in the McKinney Theater. Taylor plans to transfer to UCLA in the fall of 2006.

"I do have a life. I do spend time with family and friends. It takes patience and understanding." She credits her work ethic and maturity to growing up in a household with a disabled parent. Taylor's father is blind. She is also deeply involved with the culture of her mother, who is Chinese.

Her simple yet relevant advice for others trying to juggle similar loads is "don't sweat the small stuff," because it's the tiny nuisances, usually irrelevant, that hinder goals. Taylor follows her own advice. Losing in previous student government elections didn't discourage her from running for president last spring. "Never say no. You always have to keep going. I ran for positions in high school and I never got them until I got to college."

Nina Nawabi

It's hard to fathom silver linings in the emergency room, but Nina Nawabi decided on a new career while waiting for her mother's recovery. She witnessed the relationships between doctors, nurses and patients in what she calls an "atmosphere of compassion and interaction." Her mind was made up.

"That's when I decided to change [from a political science major] to medicine. I am the type that likes to help others and I feel more social in medicine. In health care, you are always interacting with people. In nursing you are on the go, always trying to figure out the best way to help people."

Nina and her mother came to the U.S. from Afghanistan when she was seven, amidst the political aftermath of the Soviet conflict. Her father, a pilot in the Afghan air force, is still missing in action.

Nina is now interning at Hoag Hospital in Newport Beach, assisting pulmonary unit staff with everything from clerical work to patient care. She hopes to make enough of an impression to land one of Hoag's surgery based internships. "I will actually get to stand next to a doctor and hand them tools!" She plans to transfer to California State University at Long Beach and then to medical school. She wants to be done with school by the time she is 25.

In addition to the internship, Nina takes 14 units, works part-time, and handles presidential duties. Membership in Irvine Valley's student government has grown 200%, an increase she attributes to the effective communication abilities of the current government. "On the college level you are determining where money is spent and how it benefits everyone. It's about serving the tax payer."

As Nina and Taylor have found, an education can deliver a future full of unlimited possibilities. To find out more, contact Saddleback College at 949-582-4500, www.saddleback.edu or Irvine Valley College at 949-451-5100, www.ivc.edu. Financial assistance, career counseling, and on campus child care are available. **tw**