

## La Opinion (English translation)

### A Helping Hand Helps Students Prepare for a Better Future

Thanks to College Match 65 low- income students will enroll in a university

May, 2011 - Camila Salazar is convinced she would not be enrolling at Brown University this fall without the helping hand that opened the door to such a prestigious institution. She also believes she would not have been awarded a Gates Millennium Scholarship.

"I am a good student, but I did not know the college application or financial aid process" Salazar explains. Who is of Ecuadorian origin and plans to major in neuro science.

Like her, 64 other low-income students have achieved the dream of a college education, with the help of College Match. College Match acts as a mentor to these talented high school youth so they may achieve the ultimate.

College Match prepares its students to compete with high school students at the most elite, private schools. Students must participate in intensive SAT preparation sessions, meet with college counselors to write the college applications and the college essay (Salazar had to write 11 for the Gates Scholarship), and can participate in an East Coast or Middle Atlantic college tour.

According to a study by the Century Foundation only 3% of students at the most prestigious universities in the country come from low-income households, compared to 75% who come from the highest income quartile. This provides a glimpse at the gap in access to a college education for low income students.

The situation is aggravated in California because it has the lowest proportion of students per counselors in the country. Furthermore, it is the state with a large immigrant population who is not aware of how the university system works. "My mom only finished middle school, my father barely finished sixth grade," explains Jeannette Cortez, who also attributes the help she received through College Match for her admission to Middlebury College in Vermont.

Harley Frankel, the director of this non- profit, explains that the organization operates in Los Angeles only, working with a few high schools. Among them are Bell, Garfield and Jordan high schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District along with a couple charter and magnet schools.

College counselors refer the students to this program because they believe in their star potential, and recognize challenges that may stand in their way.

The organization operates with an annual budget of 500 thousand dollars, all from private donations and support from companies like Raytheon. Raytheon also provides each College Match graduate with a laptop computer.

Cortez recognizes that not every student has the opportunity to receive help from such an organization. But she is convinced that many more students, than do now, can obtain a first rate education. "You have to ask many questions until you find the person who can guide you," adding that low income students often hear comments telling them "that type of education is not within your reach."

"I believe that the most important thing is for students to not allow these pre conceived limitations to stand in their way. Do not stop until you find someone who tells you to go forward," says Cortez.

Without its help (in Saturday sessions, for example) many of these students would not have achieved, because talent is not enough. Students need to know deadlines, different forms of essay writing, techniques and procedures, this could be one of the most important classes that high schools, with so few college counselors, do not emphasize the importance of dominating in order to gain admission into good universities.