



A L A M O  
C O L L E G E S

PALO ALTO COLLEGE

## GRADUATION SUCCESS STORY

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INTERVIEW NOTES: If you would like to interview Steven before graduation, you can contact him on his cell phone at 210.501.4617 or via email at [ssanchez330@yahoo.com](mailto:ssanchez330@yahoo.com).

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### Dropout earns High School Diploma and College Degree at same time

Steven Sanchez dropped out after middle school at the age of 15. Although he had been a good student and on the honor roll, he faced bullying. He even changed middle schools, but continued to feel as if he didn't fit in.

So he spent a year watching "Oprah" and "The View." When he turned 16, he got a job at a printing company.

Then a friend told him about the Gateway to College program at Palo Alto College. Originally funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Gateway allows youth who have dropped out to complete their high school diploma and earn college hours.

Steven signed up in Spring 2009 when he was 17 and breezed through the high school requirements by using the computer-based PLATO system that allows students to learn at their own pace. During that time he was taking some dual credit classes, where high school classes also qualify for college credit.

He decided to major in Communications, and has been a reporter for the campus' student newsletter, *The Pulse*. He was inducted into Phi Theta Kappa, the honor society for two-year colleges.

Being in a college setting helped him, he said. "I realize you can be friends with lots of people, and I finally feel like I fit in."

On Thursday, May 12, at 7 p.m. Steven will receive his Associate of Arts degree in Communications from Palo Alto College President Ana M. Guzmán at Freeman Coliseum. His high school diploma will be from the Frank Tejada Academy in the Harlandale School District, which has been a partner with Palo Alto's Gateway to College program since it started in 2005. He was able to accomplish this remarkable achievement by the age of 19.

His next stop? He has been accepted to the University of Northern Iowa through a program that guarantees PAC students full tuition, fees, and room as the Iowa institution seeks to diversify the ethnicity of its campus. The PAC/UNI Bridge Program has accepted more than 150 transfer students from Palo Alto since 1998 and provides them a Hispanic-Latino community.

Palo Alto College, one of the Alamo Colleges, is a fully accredited community college located on the Southside of San Antonio, and awards associate degrees, short-term certificates and offers non-credit continuing education classes. The campus is located at 1400 W. Villaret Blvd. at I-410 South and Texas Hwy. 16 or online at [alamo.edu/pac](http://alamo.edu/pac).