

WAHEED AKBERZIE

B.S. BIOTECHNOLOGY '14

Although Waheed Akberzie was too young to remember what it was like when his family fled Afghanistan, he has a very clear sense of how different his life would be had he grown up there.

"You really can't appreciate what you have until you lose it or see people live without it," he says. "I count my blessings every day that I grew up in California and had the opportunity to attend CI."

The first in his family to go to college, Waheed says he had dozens of defining moments that could only have happened at CSU Channel Islands. Some of his fondest memories and accomplishments are linked to Project ACCESO, a $6 million grant that supports students in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) disciplines.

"Project ACCESO was everything for me," says Waheed. "It provided me with research opportunities and outreach that I wouldn't have had at any other school. I reached out to communities in Oxnard to inspire them into STEM, and I both learned 3-D printing and later instructed underprivileged teens. It also funded me to perform scientific research for two years at CI."

Waheed now works as a Senior Site Specialist with Thermo Fisher Scientific at Amgen. He produces "media" (mixtures of chemicals) used by researchers to develop lifesaving cures for diseases. His primary interest is in the emerging field of biologics, protein based medicines targeting the body's mechanisms. He hopes to continue his education and make significant contributions in the area of Immunology.

"When I was hired at Amgen my boss told me that the experience I gained through Project ACCESO had set me apart from the other applicants," says Waheed. "It's how I got the job. I owe my success to this program and the amazing faculty at CI."

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