

# CSUCI nursing student wins prestigious CSU Trustees' Award

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Many, like Garcia are first in their families to attend college.

Garcia was raised in Minnesota where she enrolled in college after high school but moved to California after her second year and did not complete her degree. After settling in Santa Maria at the age of 20, she gave birth to two sons, which she and her boyfriend raise together.

"Even with an incredible partner and a good family of support, we struggled financially," she said. Garcia made a decision to go back to college.

"It was hard not to be able to provide all my kids needed," she said. "Then I thought, no matter what, I am going to do it, I am going to be able to support myself and my kids, and the only way to do that was to go back to school."

Garcia had always been strong in the sciences and had an interest in nursing, so she met with a counselor at Cuesta College and they worked out a plan for her to earn an associate degree and apply for the Nursing program at CSUCI.

"When I got my associate degree I didn't understand the process or comprehend the magnitude of what I was doing," she said. "Because nobody in my family ever went to college."

Garcia was determined. She worked full time at Costco during the day, took an overnight job as a Certified Nursing Assistant three nights a week and carried a full-time student load, earning her associate degree with high honors.

"I would come home in the morning, get the kids off to school, sleep for three and a half hours, and I was fine for the rest of the day," she said. "Looking back I don't know how I did it." When Garcia was accepted into the Nursing program at CSUCI, she found her calling.

"I did not understand how much I would love nursing," she said. "I loved the volunteer opportunities to get out in the community. Being with people is my passion."

The Nursing faculty inspired Garcia and she thrived at CSUCI. She was inducted into the Gamma Beta Phi and Mortar Board honor societies.

Garcia aspires to earn a doctorate of nursing practice in anesthesia and work in the field of critical care. She is also planning to do research in disaster preparedness for underserved communities.

"She will be an awesome nurse leader in the future," said Assistant Professor of Nursing LaSonya Davis. "It's rare that you see an undergraduate student so focused on improving patient outcomes and on health disparities."

Statistically speaking, because she is getting a college education, Garcia's sons, Ashton, 7 and Cruz, 5, are much more likely to earn a degree themselves.

Garcia wants to see her sons attend college, and she wants to provide an opportunity for someone else, too." Ultimately I want to have my own scholarship so I can give back," she said.

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*CSUCI Extended University offers three Nursing degree programs. Visit our [website](#) to learn more about these programs.*