

## Roosevelt senior lands \$20k college scholarship

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Like a protagonist in one of Horatio Alger's rags-to-riches tales, Roosevelt High School senior Ricardo Avelar has succeeded in the classroom despite his family's disadvantages. That success helped him win a \$20,000 scholarship to fund his college studies.

Avelar, Los Angeles-born and Fresno-raised, was one of 105 students across the United States and seven students from California to be named a national scholar by the Horatio Alger Association.

"It still hasn't hit me yet," Avelar said.

He qualified for the scholarship because he had overcome adversity, had financial need and was ready to pursue a bachelor's degree at a university.

Avelar "embodies the student that isn't dwelling on hardships and impediments," said his teacher and mentor, Paula Fansler. "He's setting the stage for the future."

He was inspired to work hard to honor the memory his father, who died in 2009.

In his essay for the scholarship application, Avelar wrote, "To me, my father was more man than anyone I have ever met. He is my inspiration to make the right decisions."

Avelar has been accepted to University of California at Davis and UC Riverside and is awaiting decisions from UC San Diego, UC Irvine and Fresno State. The Roosevelt senior plans to study something in the sciences but has not determined the specific topic.

One thing is clear: Avelar will have to keep his grades up to qualify for the entire scholarship amount, which is paid in annual increments.

One key to Avelar's high school success was Pursuit for Higher Learning, an after-school program at Roosevelt that helps high-achieving, low-income students prepare for college.

Avelar said the program had a profound effect on his work ethic, something that was apparent in his relationships with classmates.

"I just try to be an example by doing well in the classroom," he said.

Before graduating from Roosevelt, Avelar will attend an awards ceremony in Washington, D.C., where he will accept his scholarship.