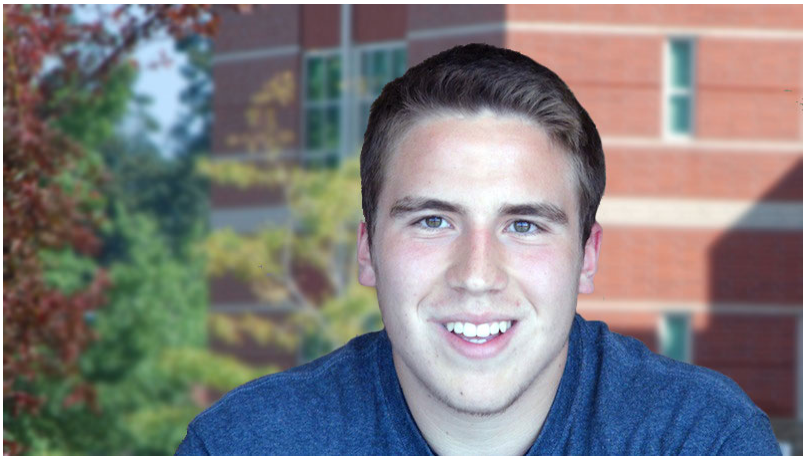
FEATURED STUDENTS



Featured Student: Jose Toledo Chavez

Century Senior Awarded Full-Ride Gates Millennium Scholarship

“I was speechless,” Jose Toledo Chavez recalled. “I couldn’t express what I was feeling. I know it’s not a dream, but it still feels like a dream.”

This was the Century High School senior’s reaction after he opened his packet and found out he had received a Gates Millennium Scholarship, only one of 28 students in Oregon and 1,000 nationwide to receive the prestigious and highly-competitive award this year. The scholarship provides funding for a student’s unmet needs for four years of undergraduate studies in college as well as graduate school in selected fields such as engineering and computer science. Winners also receive mentoring, academic and social support, and leadership development opportunities.

The scholarship frees Toledo and his family from many worries as he pursues his goal of studying mechanical engineering at Oregon State University.

“I won’t have to worry about applying for other scholarships,” Toledo said. “It will help me because I will be able to focus on my major, focus on what I love, and not think financially about school [and going into debt]. I’ve never seen [my parents] so happy in my life. They were so proud of me.”

Mason Wright, who taught Jose in Advanced Senior English and for four years in the Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID) college readiness elective at Century, was effusive in his praise of this Gates Scholar.

“My emotions were running so high, and I’m emotional right now even thinking about it. Jose is an amazing kid. [He has], by far, one of the best work ethics I’ve ever seen, period, here at Century in my eight years. I couldn’t think of anyone more deserving of this award. It was one of the most awesome, rewarding experiences I’d ever had as a teacher.”

The road to the scholarship was not an easy one; Toledo pushed himself very hard to get to this point. In addition to Advanced Senior English, Toledo also took Advanced Placement classes in Calculus, Physics and U.S. Government and Politics this school year. Outside the classroom, Toledo demonstrated his leadership capabilities as captain on the Century varsity football and track teams, in Key Club and the numerous community service projects he took on. He also passes on his work ethic and dedication to the freshmen he tutors and mentors at Century.

Once he heard about the scholarship opportunity from his brother and even his dentist, Toledo was determined to follow through. Toledo quietly spent his Christmas vacation working on the Gates Millennium Scholarship application, which included writing eight essays and getting adults to complete nomination forms—one by a person who could evaluate his academic record, and one by a person who could evaluate his leadership and community service activities.

“I don’t think my family knew I had applied for the scholarship,” he said, “until I opened the packet [which said] ‘Congratulations, you’re a Gates Millennium Scholar.’ “

Toledo is a humble young man and grateful for all the help and encouragement he’s received.

“I am proud to be part of the Hillsboro School District and Century High School … this community has given me so much and offers so many opportunities if you take the chance. [They] have made me who I am right now and I am really thankful for that.”

Wright is one of many who are looking forward to Toledo’s continued success.

“We’re so excited,” Wright exclaimed, “to see what he can do with [the scholarship] and what he’s going to achieve at Oregon State.”