

From Homelessness to Roadrunner: Meet Sean Ceballos – Crafton Hills College’s 2022-23 Student Senate President

Crafton Hills College has made a significant impact on Sean Ceballos.

While experiencing homelessness and adjusting to life in a wheelchair, Ceballos knew he had to do something to change his circumstances, even if the cards seemed stacked against him. So, the Yucaipa resident asked his best friend for help and began to explore his options.

“My Mom and I were homeless about two years ago, and I didn’t want that to happen again. I knew that I could get free money going to college to help and learn something new at the same time,” explained the Yucaipa Adult School grad. “But after meeting the staff here at Crafton, I quickly learned this was such a warm and welcoming place. It felt like someone was here to see me and want me to succeed.”

As Ceballos continues to find his place on campus, the 31-year-old wants to use his voice to help make an impact at Crafton as well as off-campus through public service -- so much so that he decided to run for CHC’s Student Senate last year. This year, however, he had bigger dreams and ran as a candidate for 2022-23 Student Senate President -- and won.

Ceballos said his love of participating in student government was formed at a young age but living in the Midwest didn’t afford him the opportunity then.

While at Crafton, a chance encounter ignited that spark once again when a former member of the Student Senate came to speak to one of Ceballos’ classes, and he decided to “give it a shot.”

“At the time, I picked the position that I felt had the least responsibility out of fear because I didn’t want to mess up,” continued the two-year senate member. “I had this idea about sitting in the background and watching what happens, but as more topics came popping up and there were more things to do, I wanted to speak up more.”

Reaction to his running for Student Senate was a welcomed one. His mom noticed over time a difference in her son’s personality, a stark contrast to his mental health at what he says was the lowest part of his life.

“My mother always knew this was me and she waited for me to see it in myself,” Ceballos continued. “When I got shot, that put a damper on everything. It took the will to live out of me. And then going through homelessness and seeing how my mom and I struggled with that and then COVID and having to sleep in a van, I felt like I needed to end my life.”

“I promised my friends that I would give it a year to get things together. I can honestly say that Isaac (my best friend) saved my life. His helping us find a home allowed me to finish my (high school) diploma and now finish up at Crafton,” he continued.

Today, Ceballos has plans to graduate from CHC in 2023 with multiple degrees in History, English, Social Science and – potentially – Communications. He also has big dreams to transfer to U.C. Berkely – his number one choice – or UCLA, Cal State San Bernardino or Fullerton and pursue a law degree to help others who have struggled to overcome setbacks.

But right now, Ceballos is focused on completing his goals, including leaving a mark on Crafton by encouraging its student population to get more involved, as well as starting an annual multi-cultural event and career fair.

“A career fair would be a great way to see how many different cohorts there are,” he explained. “I didn’t come here thinking I was going to be a lawyer. But now I want to be there for people who don’t have a

voice.” He believes that we live in a country where his mom should be able to provide her children a suitable place to live, proper transportation and food on the table.

As for advice he has for those looking to pursue a higher education or experiencing homelessness, suicidal thoughts or other mental health problems, Ceballos said the biggest thing he had to learn was to not be afraid to ask for help.

“Asking for help is the most frightening, most intimidating thing I’ve had to do, but it has been really helpful,” he said. “Asking for help that one time changed my life.”

Photo: Student Senate President, Sean Ceballos.