

For Immediate Release

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Two SCUSD students named Gates Millennium Scholars

Award covers college tuition, living expenses for four years

June 8 2015(Sacramento) Two SCUSD students have been named Gates Millennium Scholars, an award that covers the cost of attending college for high performing, low income students of color.

Luther Burbank High School salutatorian Seena Singh, 18, and John F. Kennedy High School senior Manuel Valencia, 18, are among 1,000 students nationwide in the program's Class of 2015. The scholarship is funded by a \$1.6 billion grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Mr. Valencia is the second in his family to win the Gates Millennium scholarship: His older brother, Rafael (JFK Class of 2013), is attending UC Irvine with the help of the program. A Kennedy Mathlete and member of CSF, Mr. Valencia graduates with a 3.9 grade point average. He will study civil engineering at Sacramento State.

“I’ve always been interested in engineering and protecting the environment,” he says.

To compete for Gates Millennium funding, students must write seven essays, including one describing “challenges” to success. Valencia said he wrote about the challenge of learning English.

“I grew up in a family that speaks mostly Spanish,” he said. “So I started school in special English Learner classes.”

The GMS program provides recipients with leadership development opportunities, mentoring, academic and social support as well as financial support. The program is known for its recipients’ high graduation rates—a six-year rate of more than 87 percent (28 percent higher than the national graduation rates for all students and comparable to the rate for students from high-income families). This year’s cohort represents 47 states, the District of Columbia and seven U.S. territories and American Territories.

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