



# EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP DEPARTMENT

November Newsletter



## Colleagues connect at lunch

EDLD students get the opportunity to inspire their colleagues to pursue doctorates at The Beach

Invite a Colleague to Lunch is a yearly event in October that gives current students and alumni the opportunity to connect with their colleagues outside of work and share valuable insight to the Ed.D program. The guests enjoy a lunch provided by the EDLD department followed by an information session led by Distinguished Faculty in Residence, Dr. James Scott.

### **Melissa and Taylor:**

These colleagues work together in student affairs at LBSU. Melissa Norrbom is the coordinator of Student Life and Development and Taylor Buhler-Scott is the Programs Manager for the Beach Pride Center for ASI. Melissa and Taylor are good friends as well and Melissa knew that Taylor was interested in pursuing a doctoral degree, so she invited her to the event.

Taylor is nearly done with her Master's in Business degree and she's already looking forward at pursuing a doctorate, she says she wants to be prepared in any way she can. After the information session, she might be able to see herself in

Cohort 12.

"I enjoy Long Beach State, I've been here as an employee for almost three years now and I've been able to see how dedicated the faculty and staff are to the students throughout campus and to hear about this program and the dedication they show," Taylor said. "I think that's a special thing and it's something that's really desired as student."

Melissa is part of Cohort 10 and feels that with one full semester under her belt, she can say that she recommends the program to her friends.

"I'm even more excited to be going through this journey with my cohort and follow in the footsteps of all the great people who came before me," Melissa said.

"I feel like I'm going to be a forever student in one way, shape or form," Taylor said. "I think that you never stop learning, even when you've completed your doctoral degree. There's never a time when you've learned all that you can. And now that I'm coming towards the end of a Master's program, I'm starting to look more into those opportunities of where my skillsets and interests and the biggest impact that I may have, will be."

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## Soraska and Amber:

Soraska Norang and Amber Bravo were cohort-mates in Graduate school while they were pursuing their Master's in Early Childhood Education, so to Soraska, it was a "no-brainer" to invite Amber to the event. Amber has been looking at doctoral programs for the past several months, so it was very "serendipitous" that Soraska invited her.

"I loved what they said in there, that an Education Doctorate is within practice and that's what I want to continue to do and advocate for our field," Amber said. "I also liked what Dr. Scott said about us being trendsetters, and we're a rarity to get doctors in early childhood education and we really want to make a difference ... I want to be in practice, with families and educators and children."

EDLD made an impression on Amber and she said that she would definitely apply in February.

# Student Spotlight: Eric Garcia

### Cohort 8 student stays connected to his military roots

Rather than serve in the military like most of his family for generations had done, Eric Garcia has found his calling to serve the military as a Veteran's Counselor.

"I fell in love with the population," Eric said. "I felt that there was a need there, to tell their stories, to provide them with better experiences that previous vets did not have. I thought that advocacy piece was missing and now it's something I wanted to provide a solution for and a voice for."

His father, grandfather, great-grandfather and even most of his close friends from high school all had found careers in the military. While much of his family encouraged him to go into the military after high school, Eric's mother encouraged him to pursue education. He did and he became a first-generation college graduate and even inspired his mom to get her bachelor's degree too.

"I think me going down the education side and reflecting back to my past draws in that curiosity and that passion for serving veterans," Eric said. "It wasn't anything about not wanting to go or wanting to go [into the military], it was just that I think education for me was the golden ticket in terms of advancing myself personally and professionally."

Even though Eric didn't think he was "college material," he successfully transferred from community college and earned his bachelor's degree. He continued with his momentum and went on to get his master's degree and now he's the first person in his family to pursue a doctorate.

"I never thought I would be a college graduate, and then I graduated, and then I graduated again as a master's graduate," Eric said. "So with a doctorate I never thought I'd get this far, so I thought 'let's just go out and see if I can do it.'"

He chose the Educational Leadership Department at LBSU because he liked the social justice emphasis the program has. He says he was excited for the opportunity to get leadership

training to advocate for disenfranchised groups.

For his dissertation, he is studying student veterans who are pursuing a transfer degree to a 4-year university and how they are running out of their GI Bill before ever transferring. The 5th generation GI Bill or the post-9/11 GI Bill gives 36 months of public school education.

Returning veterans have to transition and often work at the same time, so to finish in 36 months is difficult. He saw the challenges with transitioning to civilian life up close when his friends, who were once carefree teenagers, return from the military as structured and focused men.

"They had a new outlook on life because of their world experiences and that kind of sparked my curiosity," Eric said. "But they also had a lot of things that they wouldn't disclose because they're all combat veterans ... A lot of them had difficulty with the transition because of the mental challenges they were experiencing and the transitional civilian challenges, so that also sparked my curiosity and passion."

As a Veteran's counselor, Eric looks to provide 3-pronged support: academic, personal and career. Because he has so many personal connections with military life already, he's able

to provide support from a similar perspective.

"It also just goes back to those core values of hope and love and at the end of the day," Eric said. "They're people, so you just reach out to them with empathy and love and support and care ... And just knowing what they went through, the general transitional challenges of vets and knowing how to connect with them with counseling-related techniques and strategies and resources, I think helps the transition process go relatively good."

Eric's father and family are all proud of how he has chosen to serve.

"As cliché as it sounds, it's more of an honor to serve them just because of everything they went through," Eric said.



Photo courtesy of Eric Garcia