

Milton Grant 12th Grader at Alisal High School in Salinas wins \$1,000 college scholarship in “Save Me a Spot in College” Contest sponsored by the Campaign for College Opportunity



“Picture yourself walking a slow and steady walk to nowhere, no place at all; that's how we feel under the drugs, crime, shootings, and deaths. My peers and I are under a rock, which is overcrowding the rose that wishes to flourish,” writes Milton Grant, a young athlete committed to fighting any obstacles thrown his way. This excerpt is from his award winning essay in the “Save Me a Spot in College” Scholarship Contest which received over 12,000 entries. The Contest, sponsored by the Campaign for College Opportunity, awarded scholarships to 200 middle and high school students around the state.

An aspiring pharmacist, Milton is facing his senior year of high school – and he’s ready. He has already finished all of his A-G requirements and has started thinking about where he’d like to go to college – UC Riverside, Sacramento State, or UC Berkeley.

Milton has managed to stay away from the negative activities that affect too many of his classmates and has instead chosen to pursue a college education. Even with the separation of his parents two years ago, Milton is coping and has stayed focused and been successful in his athletics and academics.

While neither of his parents went to college, they have continually preached to Milton and his younger brother about the importance of a good education, specifically a college degree. His coaches have also been influential in the development of his ideas about college, encouraging him with their own stories of overcoming adversity and testifying to the greatness of an education. Knowing that he is the first in his family to go to college is important to him because “it opens up a lot of opportunities” and he is a role model to his little brother.

An ever increasing number of California’s young people are the first in their families to go to college – they face significant challenges that they must overcome in order to reach college. These challenges contain both the pragmatic problem of figuring out how to get there and get financial aid and the equally critical issue – to believe that it is possible.

This is one reason why advocates and policymakers want lawmakers to pass SB 890 Early Commitment to College this year. The strategy of SB 890 is powerful and unique because it packages college and financial aid opportunities into one commitment made to students at an early age – starting in the 6th grade. This means students like Milton Grant will learn early about their college opportunities. California already invests in an open-access community college system, excellent public universities, and many financial aid programs. This bill leverages these investments to motivate students.

Milton seeks to stand on the shoulders of his parents and achieve a “better life” than they have had to struggle to provide. While the financial burden of college seems at times overwhelming, this young role model knows he will find a way to make it happen.

The “Save Me a Spot in College” Scholarship Contest is made possible in part because of the generosity of funders such as the College Access Foundation of California and the McConnell Foundation.