



# ROUNDTABLE

## NEWS AND VIEWS FOR AND FROM KNIGHTS

### College Prep at MCS



Mount Carmel School senior, Michelle Palacios, practices a drill as part of the school's SAT Boot Camp.

"I still don't know what I want to do with my life, but I know I need to go to college." For Mount Carmel School senior, Michelle Palacios, going to college is an important part of succeeding in life, which is why she began the college application process early this school year.

But the drive to go college began long before this year, when Michelle participated in her first College Fair at the school. It was the first time she realized that college was not only important, but a viable option for her.

Michelle's journey is similar to many other AlumKnights who have walked the hallways of Mount Carmel School. Since opening its doors in 1952, and especially after it started Saipan's first high school in 1956, the school has established a reputation as a college-prep school. That reputation is reinforced by the countless AlumKnights who have earned admission into some of the world's leading institutions, including Ateneo de Manila University, Korea University, Georgetown University, New York University, University of California at Berkeley, University of Southern California, the University of Michigan, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and the United States Military Academy at West Point, to name a few.

While this track record stems from a rigorous academic curriculum, at Mount Carmel School, preparing students for college goes well beyond the curriculum. Based on an individualized approach that meets the unique needs of each student, over the past few years, the school has launched a wide array of programs to help students get into college and be ready for the demands of college. In Michelle's case, these programs have provided the structure she needs to navigate the entire college admissions process.

#### THE VALUE OF COLLEGE

Before anyone applies to college, however, it must be clear why they would dedicate four more years of her or his life to continued studies. According to the College Board, earning a four-year college degree leads to several benefits, including almost double the average annual salary as a high school graduate, twice the likelihood of employment as a high school graduate, and even increased rates of health insurance. The

College Board also notes other lesser known long-term benefits of a college degree, including healthier lifestyles, closer families, and increased community service.

The importance of college is something that 2016 AlumKnight, Thomas Manglona II, has emphasized since he was a freshman at his alma mater. First and foremost, Thomas worked on his academic track record, taking Advance Placement courses and supplementing his transcripts with a number of online courses. Second, and just as important, Thomas developed a well-rounded resume, starting a Journalism Club at the school, participating competitively in the National Speed and Debate Association, and serving as Student Council president in his senior year, when he initiated a number of new programs at the school.

Thomas's focus on college earned him several pre-college opportunities, including admission into the Junior Statesmen of America program at Stanford University, acceptance into the prestigious JCamp for journalists sponsored by the Asian American Journalists Association (AAJA), and number of internships. These opportunities paved the way towards his admission into UC Berkeley and being selected for the prestigious Gates Millennium Scholars program.

Now that Thomas is in college, he has come to a deeper appreciation for the value of higher education. For instance, he recognizes how much college helps students learn more about themselves and about others. "Going to college allows you to learn more about yourself and the world around you. You find what you are interested in or what you would never want to do again. You meet people from all over the globe with different experiences, some of which may reaffirm your identities and beliefs or even challenge them to the point you reconsider your position." Thomas added, "College is a short period of life but is a highly condensed time where you become more critical and learn new things that you did not even know you did not know." Thomas has taken these words to heart since arriving at Berkeley, where he has continued his passion for journalism, working his way up to news director for Berkeley's CALTV news program and earning the Lloyd LaCuesta Broadcast News Internship Grant from the AAJA.

Now, Thomas has turned his attention to helping other students, especially Pacific Islanders, gain the most from a college education. His advice for high school students? Get help. "My advice to fellow students is to reach out to your teachers, closest friends, and family members so that they can help you write a compelling personal essay that not only helps grants you admission to the college of your choice, but awards you scholarships to fund your academic journey." Thomas added, "While the application process is complex, if you pour your heart into your application neither you nor your readers will be disappointed as you've presented your true self to the university or scholarship program. No matter where you come from, your story is invaluable."

For Pacific Islanders, Thomas noted, "Universities and places of higher education have historically not been places you see Pacific Islanders or other people of color. Your mere presence on campus paves the way for another member of the community to be in a similar



2016 AlumKnight, Thomas Manglona II, is proud of his island roots, posing for a photo here at the UC Botanical garden.

situation. The challenges then become not only striving to have more minorities admitted to college, but also leaving with their degree in hand -- a baton of sorts to be passed on to the next person."

As a Pacific Islander herself, Michelle appreciates Thomas's message. "Sometimes I feel like why am I doing this? At the same time, I see that college will help me in the future, so I keep at it." On that note, Michelle recognizes that the school's programs are helping her stay on track.

#### SAT BOOT CAMP

One program that Michelle has availed of is the school's SAT Boot Camp. First offered in the fall of 2009, the six-week boot camp is designed to help students improve their performance on the College Board's SAT, a standardized test used for most college admissions in the United States. The program curriculum helps students master several skills necessary to do well on the test. These skills include analyzing and explaining how the test is designed and scored; learning and utilizing effective test-taking strategies; and easing test-taking anxiety and increasing comfort and confidence by taking practice tests. Students also review and refresh their content knowledge in English and math.

For over almost a decade, over a hundred students have taken the boot camp, many of whom have increased their SAT scores by an average of 200 points. In some cases, students have raised their scores by almost 400 points.

Since signing up for the camp, Michelle has seen her performance improve on practice tests. More importantly, the camp has helped her gain the confidence to take the SAT. "I feel prepared for the SAT, which I'm taking on October 7, but I may take it again in November depending on how I do."

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## Announcements

### 2016-2017 Yearbooks

Yearbooks for last school year are now available. With limited quantities, don't miss this chance to relive the memories from last year as you build new ones this year. \$50 per yearbook, available in the Business Office.

### 2017 Film Festival

The MCS Theatre Club proudly presents its 2017 Film Festival on Wednesday, October 18, at Hollywood Theaters. The festival will feature a number of short films, including "We Drank Our Tears: Francisco Babauta's Story", which was an official selection for the recent Guam International Film Festival and was a nominee for three major awards. \$10.00 admission. Tickets and permission slips are available in the Business Office. Buses depart campus at 8:00 am.

## In the Future

### Senior Game Night TONIGHT

### PGFC Meet

Tomorrow, Saturday, October 7  
Francisco Mendiola Sablan Middle School

### CNMI Cultural Diversity Day

Monday, October 9 (no classes)

### NHS Mini-Carnival

Wednesday, October 11

### Freshmen Pearl Stand

Thursday, October 12

### Senior Fried Oreo Stand

Friday, October 13

### NSDA/NJSDA Debate Meet

Friday, October 13, 5:00-9:00 pm  
Marianas High School

### NSDA/NJSDA Meet

Saturday, October 14  
Marianas High School

## Sports Calendar

### Cross Country

TOMORROW, Saturday, October 7 at 4:00 pm  
Airport Field

### CCOPSA Middle School Basketball

TODAY, Friday, October 6  
MCS Boys v SCS @MCS at 3:30 pm

Monday, October 9

MCS Boys v ACS @ACS at 3:30 pm

Friday, October 13

MCS Boys v SIS @SIS at 3:30 pm

## ESLR of the Week

*#3. Integrate religious themes to reinforce Catholicism and sacramental virtue of life.*

## College Prep

*continued from front*

### KNIGHTS SEMINAR

In addition to the SAT Boot Camp, Michelle is enrolled in Mount Carmel School's Knights Seminar. Now in its sixth year at the school, Knights Seminar prepares seniors for life after high school. The seminar focuses on four curriculum strands: college admissions, study skills, soft skills, and financial literacy. For college admissions, the seminar familiarizes students with the college admissions process, including researching colleges, writing personal statements, completing and submitting applications, and identifying financial aid and scholarships.

To help students succeed in college as well as in high school, the study skills curriculum strand teaches students the behaviors that contribute to academic success, including note-taking, mind-mapping, time and task management, and self-control. The strand also uses current educational research in cognitive psychology to introduce students to proven strategies for effective learning. The soft skills and financial literacy curriculum strands provide students a hands-on study of the practical skills needed to seek employment, succeed in the workforce, and manage one's personal finances.



2013 AlumKnight, Jimin Ryu, shares her exciting journey helping a new start-up company that is developing braille and other assistive technology to help the visually impaired make the most of smart phones and social media.

So far this year, the school has hosted speakers from Northern Marianas College Financial Aid Office, the Saipan Higher Education Financial Assistance (SHEFA) program, and military service academies. AlumKnights have also come home to share some of their experiences with current students.

Just this week, 2013 AlumKnight and former Student Council president, Jimin Ryu, visited the school to share her recent experience transitioning from college to the workforce. As she finishes up her last year at Korea

University, Jimin has joined a new start-up company that is developing braille and other assistive technology to help the visually impaired make the most of smart phones and social media. It has given her the opportunity to work in an exciting field while making a positive difference in the world. However, in talking with the seniors, Jimin pointed out that she never thought she would enter this field. As she put it, "You just have to be ready for these opportunities that could come your way and

open yourself up to those possibilities." She added, "It helps to have a plan, but it helps even more to be flexible and ready."

This message resonated with Michelle, who has struggled with what to do with her life. "The most helpful speaker so far has been Jimin Ryu, because despite her success as a student, she found a new path from what she initially intended."

It has also reassured Michelle as she moves forward with her college applications. "I don't really feel pressure from my family, but I've been pressuring myself. Listening to Jimin helps take some of that pressure off."

### COLLEGE WEEK AND COLLEGE SIGNING DAY

While Michelle is enrolled in both the SAT Boot Camp and Knights Seminar, she attributes her drive to go to college to AlumKnights before her who have highlighted the value of college. This was especially apparent with the school's annual College Week and College Signing Day. Last year's College Fair featured a college fair in which professionals from across the island represented their college alma maters at booths in the first floor hallway of the school's Maturana Building.

Each year, College Week also includes presentations on federal and local financial aid, a session in which seniors mentor juniors, and even a college gear day that invites students and teachers to represent their favorite colleges with clothing and accessories from those colleges. The week culminates with National College Signing Day, which was started three years ago by then First Lady Michelle Obama as part of her Reach Higher initiative to promote college enrollment, especially among minorities.

During last year's College Week, Michelle recalls meeting with several representatives from California schools. As a result, she is now focusing her applications on California schools. The contacts she made during College Week helped her realize, "It's not too far from here, and the cultural diversity and the nice weather are both appealing to me."

### YEAR-LONG COLLEGE PREP

College-prep at the school, however, spans the entire year, not just College Week. Throughout the year, the school brings in numerous guest speakers to cover various topics, including financial aid, scholarships, possible military service, and career exploration.

## PTO Corner

### Parent Subs Needed

Are you willing to serve as a substitute teacher for the school and get paid? Then contact Luis Camacho at 287-9753.

### Schedule of Meetings

November 8  
Election of Officers  
5:30 pm • Faculty Lounge

November 21  
Turkey Trot

*All parents are encouraged and welcome to join us for these important meetings.*

*For more information, contact PTO President, Luis Camacho, at 287-9753.*