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"Grateful" Veteran Making a Difference at Dominican

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"Grateful" Veteran Making a Difference at Dominican

"Dominican took an interest in me for who I was really was and not because I was just a veteran. They made me part of the Dominican family instantly," says Garcia, who is scheduled to graduate from the University in December before entering the police academy in February 2015. "They told me if you want to do something special academically then do it. We will help you."

Garcia was looking for help in 2010 when he was inspired by a PBS television documentary about wounded military veterans. He wanted to make more of his post-military life. He decided to attend City College in San Francisco and study psychology.

"I knew I wanted to get into psychology because first of all I wanted to figure out what was going on with me, but also what can I do to help vets getting out of the military," he says.

He was encouraged at City College to continue his education at a four-year public university. But he discovered the transfer process was much easier to enroll at a private institution. He was accepted at several private universities including St. Mary's and USF, but toured and chose Dominican because of its size, its scenic campus ("It kind of looked like I was on a vacation") and its "[Yellow Ribbon Program](#)" which benefits Post 9/11 GI Bill eligible veterans and/or transferees who qualify for additional tuition assistance.

Garcia's quest has been a team effort. He first met with Christian Dean, a professor and pre-law adviser in the [Department of Political Science and International Studies](#). Dean encouraged Garcia to enroll in classes for constitutional law and debate.

"Given what I know about his challenging and intense experiences in the military, it impresses me that he is such an easy-going person," says Dean, who appreciates Garcia being a mentor to younger students. "It's a privilege as teacher to work with a student that is so grateful to be here. I'm really grateful that he is here. He exhibits a gratitude for the opportunity and support he has been given."

Garcia, who is majoring in [psychology](#) with a minor in political science, is thriving at Dominican.

"It's one of the best institutions around here. You're part of a family. That's worth more than anything in my eyes," Garcia says. "You get to interact with the teachers and they become part of your life. I don't feel inferior to them. They make you feel so welcomed."

Garcia, along with Malcolm Isley, helped organize a Students Veterans Club on campus. It has about 40 members and on Wednesdays the club holds a care package drive in front of Caleruega Dining Hall to collect items of use the group plans to send to service members currently deployed to Afghanistan.

In addition, for Veterans Day, the club hosted a free barbecue lunch on campus.

"It's been crazy how everyone on campus has been so supportive," he says. "Everyone is amazing here."

Garcia is impressed with all the contacts and connections he has made at Dominican. He has matured and prospered in its educational structure.

“The number one thing I’ve learned at Dominican is everything is problem solving. From how to write a paper accurately and effectively to paying attention to detail,” Garcia says. “They are not going to give you the answers to the questions but they are going to give you the tools to answer those questions. They are not going to hand feed you. They are going to say, ‘here’s the dinner and you eat it yourself.’ ”

Garcia has accepted that challenge. He has a thirst for knowledge. He plans to come out of police academy in May 2015 to walk at Commencement at Dominican and already is applying to graduate schools to support his goal of becoming a police officer.

“It’s been an amazing transformation,” Garcia says. “I don’t want to stop. I want to be as knowledgeable as possible.”

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