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Press Release

Public Schools of Robeson County

Tasha Oxendine

Students from early college program graduate with advantages

As Gabriela Hernandez crossed the stage at the Robeson Early College graduation, she crossed a milestone for herself and her family as a first generation graduate of a family who moved to North Carolina from Mexico.

Hernandez graduated Summa Cum Laude with Beta Club Honors and, in addition to her high school degree, she has college credits that will transfer as a college technical prep completion certificate. She also received a \$1,000 scholarship to Robeson Community College.

"There are so many words, I can't describe it. I am so emotional because it is amazing. I did it and I am proud of myself. Early College gave me a lot of opportunity to learn and experience and make network connections with people," Hernandez said.

Hernandez said she plans to attend Robeson Community College to study in the Early Childhood program with the hopes of becoming a teacher. She is part of the 8th class to graduate from the Early College program. Out of the 32 students in her class, 15 received their associate's degree from RCC. The other students have transferrable college credits, which they may use to enroll in a 4-year university allowing them to be ahead on their college career. This will shorten their college years and tuition bill.

Robeson County Early College High School, based on the campus of Robeson Community College, is a "learn and earn" high school, which enables students to graduate with a high school diploma as well as two years of transferable credit or an associate's degree. The PSRC program is an academically rigorous and accelerated course of study for 200 students, in grades 9 -12. As the students received additional preparation, they received many accolades. Josh Oxendine received the Gates Scholarship, which is a full ride in education.

“We teach and try to incorporate in our high school classes all the skills they are going to need in those college classes,” said Sheila Gasque, Early College High School principal. We get them to be independent learners as we try to build responsibility into them because there are so many students when they go to a four year university they are not ready. Our students know now what a college environment is like, so they tend to be more successful.”

Ernest Strickland feels he is ready after 11 tough classes in the program. He graduated Phi Beta Kappa, Summa Cum Laude and is going to the Savannah College of Art and Design.

“It was an amazing opportunity and I was blessed with one in a few chances to be able to attend this school and it was such a privilege. This is really a part of my life I do not regret because it has taught me so many things,” said Strickland.