

Announcer: Welcome to Hancock Conversations, an Allan Hancock College podcast. Join President Dr. Kevin G. Walthers and members of the Hancock community as they explore the stories behind the people and places that make Allan Hancock College the unique hub for learning that it is today. You're sure to learn something new and even have a little fun along the way.

Dr. Kevin Walthers: Welcome to Hancock Conversations. I'm Kevin Walthers, superintendent/president here at Allan Hancock College. On today's podcast we have with us three student leaders, starting with Ana Rosas Pacheco, our student trustee, David Bautista and Francisco Avila, who are both student ambassadors. Welcome to the podcast.

David Bautista: Thank you so much for having us.

Ana Rosas Pacheco: Hi everyone, thank you for having us.

KW: So, it's always exciting when students are engaged, and we get a chance to let them share their stories. So, we're going to start off with letting each one of the students give a little history, like tell us where you went to high school, and what your major is, and what you hope to do after you leave Hancock. So, we'll start with Ana, go ahead Ana.

ARP: Hi everyone. My name is Ana Rosas. I'm the student trustee. Before I came to Hancock, I graduated Santa Maria High School in 2018, so I've been here for three years. After finishing my associate degree here at Hancock, I plan on transferring to Fresno and pursuing my bachelor's in criminal justice, and hopefully minor in behavioral science.

KW: Nice. David, tell us your plans.

DB: Hey everyone. My name is David Bautista Gonzales. I'm currently in my second year at Hancock, and I graduated in 2019 from the Central Coast New Tech High. It's a school in Nipomo. Currently, I'm not sure where I want to attend when I transfer, but I'm looking into Cal Poly and Sonoma. Those schools are pretty interesting to me. And there I want to pursue a business degree and possibly minor in psychology. I'm looking into either human resources or creating a nonprofit as a career choice.

KW: Nice. Very good. Francisco?

Francisco Avila: Hello, my name is Francisco Avila Estevez. I'm a freshman here at Hancock after graduating from Pioneer Valley High School. And so, I'm not quite sure what I want to pursue in life; however, I am currently majoring in engineering, so a similar field in that. I'm only interested in the best schools, and so my aspirations are high. My goal is to go to Stanford, like after I graduate, or actually, after I get my associate degree to transfer.

KW: Nice. That's very good. So, David, are you actually from Nipomo, or are you one of the Santa Barbara County guys that went up to New Tech?

DB: No, I'm actually from Nipomo, but the year I came to Hancock, I moved to Santa Maria with my aunt.

KW: Oh, nice, nice. So, we know, Ana and Francisco, that you guys are Promise students, correct?

ARP: Yes, we are.

KW: So, Ana, tell us how you learned about the Promise, and what that meant for you coming to school.

ARP: The year that I graduated was the first year that the Promise started, so I think that my graduation year was the first generation of the Promise. I think a lot of us found out about it because they would go to our campus and advertise it, and I think a lot of us decided to come to Hancock, because of it. You know, Santa Maria has a very high population of Hispanic families. And, you know, coming from parents that work in the farms or any other type of outside work, I feel like it's harder for us to, you know, pursue a higher education, just because we don't have the resources. So, when we found out about the Promise, I think that inspired us to continue our education, as seeing as we did have the resources, and that there were things out there for us.

KW: Awesome. Francisco, tell us about how you got to know about the Promise program and what it meant for your family.

FA: So, my story is pretty similar to Ana's. Promise was always advertised to us by our counselors, by our teachers, and also by my parents. My parents also were field workers, like most of their lives. That's also my motivation, you know, how hard my parents work to give us a good life. And so, I'm just trying to aspire to that. So yeah, basically pretty similar story, in terms of knowing the Promise, being a promise student.

KW: Great, great. So, we're going to change. I told you guys an order a minute ago, and now I've got new questions, so we'll change a little bit. David, you've been a student ambassador, tell us a little bit about what you do as a student ambassador and what you're doing for your fellow students in the community.

DB: Yeah, so as Kevin said, President Walthers, I am a student ambassador, and it's a pretty awesome job, just because you work on campus. And before COVID-19, a lot of my duties were outreach, so we would help out certain events, whether that be on or off campus. Essentially, the way I see it, it's like we're a resource for the students, as well as the faculty here. We kind of know a little bit of everything from each department, so we can answer any questions that students have when they need help. Currently with COVID, a lot of us are helping with outreach. We've been calling the local high schools, when school started, so we can get more students to sign up for Promise. And we're also helping with food distributions, which are Mondays, Tuesdays Wednesdays and Thursdays; from 10:30 to 1:00 on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and 2:30 to 4:30 on Wednesdays. So yeah, we do give out food to the community and the students, which is pretty helpful because during this time of need, you know, everybody can use a little help here and there.

KW: And you know, our Food Share program has been so successful. It's been, I want to say 36,000 cars have gone through our food share just since the end of March, and that represents more than 163,000 people in our community. So, you guys are changing the odds for the families in our communities in a way that's tremendous, so, we're grateful for that. Francisco, have you been working on the food share as well?

FA: Yes, I have actually. So, I am a first-year student ambassador. I just recently got accepted to become one, at the beginning of this month, actually. And so, it's been really, really hard for me, especially like schedule wise, just because I have so many other responsibilities. However, I do it because I want to help the community. As David was talking about food share, that's the only thing I've been exposed to. However, I've been putting in my best effort, so to get every single car going, you know. It's been really, really fun, especially meeting all the people, all my fellow student ambassadors. They're really, really

enjoyable people. People who like to have fun, people who like to talk. And me being an outgoing person, I fit in that category.

KW: Perfect. So, Ana, now you're our student trustee, which means you're at the board meetings and you take part in helping the board set policy. What have you learned by being a student trustee?

ARP: Wow, that's a good question. I've learned that there's a lot behind the scenes that the students don't see, that are getting done for them. There's a lot of things that they, the Board of Trustees, need to do in order for the students to have the resources or the students to have, you know, to be able to be treated the same way. In the beginning of my year, as a student trustee, we discussed looking at our policies and making sure that everybody was being equalized and that everybody was getting the same treatment, and so I've learned that you guys do care. And maybe being a student not involved at the school, you might sometimes feel like the people here aren't for you, or they're not here to serve you, but they are, they really do care. Behind the scenes they're really working to have you guys be successful.

KW: Yeah, I think one of the nice things about our board is they're engaged in what's going on on campus, but, you know, they like to let our faculty or staff and our students do what needs to be done. They know that they don't have to be here every minute of the day, and it makes for a nice campus climate. And you're right, a lot of times the students don't even know, you know, why they get certain kinds of financial aid or emergency fund or those kinds of projects. And it's really because the Board of Trustees is willing to support all of those programs. So, I'm going to ask you each what you think about, you know, our enrollment's obviously down, and students are struggling to come to class, and even the ones who are enrolled are struggling with their classes. So, I want to ask each of you this, to kind of tell me what you're hearing from your fellow students or from people you know who were in school and aren't right now. And maybe give us a sense of what are the barriers that some of them are facing? Ana, we'll start with you, for that question.

ARP: I think the main thing is, of course, being online. And I think that struggle is there because it's harder to concentrate at home. You have internet, you have Netflix, you have kids, you have social media. It's easier for us to get distracted just because we're not in the class setting and have a professor in front of us, you know, looking at us, teaching us. They see us, you know, being on our phones and getting distracted. And that's just one of the things that I've heard a lot from my fellow students, they get distracted, because, you know, they have so many temptations at home, or they just can't focus, or maybe their life environment isn't what it should be. And we've just been struggling and trying to keep up with the pace of online, and some say that their teachers are even harder on them now because they expect more from them. I think that's really, like, wow, you know, teachers are really out there. I mean they do help us some, but I think it is a good and a bad thing that they have high expectations for us, because they do make us want to push ourselves. But then there are students right now that are having a very difficult time and just having that pressure may increase the reason why they either want to stop coming, or they want to take a semester off. And I think that's also one of the reasons why the majority of students did take a semester off, because they knew, or they felt like they weren't going to be able to complete their classes.

KW: David, what are you hearing?

DB: I've actually been hearing and experiencing a lot of what Ana was saying. I actually have been talking with my sister and my mom. Just because my sister, right now she's a senior, so she went on that

transition from going in person, and then online. And same thing with my mom. She's currently taking her GED classes with noncredit, and this is her first time taking any sort of class. And pretty much the whole premise was, you know, one of the things I like about Hancock is it's very resourceful, there's a lot of great resources for the students. However, with the transition with online classes, a lot of those resources were kind of cut short or had to adapt. And one of the things I'm seeing is that a lot of students are not using those resources to their advantage, just because they think it's going to be different. I think the only difference is that you're not really meeting a person, you know. I've used the resource with the Math Center and, you know, they're able to help me with my homework. And same thing with the Writing Center. They're there to help. But I feel like a lot of our students are not or have told me that they're not really using the resource, because they feel like they need that one-to-one person. And the other thing Ana touched on was, you know, easily being distracted, because it's so easy to sit down, and log into Zoom, and then go on your phone. At least for me, I really need to be in a classroom, and I'm sure others can agree with me on this, to really motivate me and keep me focused. Because looking at a screen all day, I already do that with my phone. So, with the addition of the laptop, it's really a lot. I really need to look at a whiteboard and my professor in front of me, and a lot of students have mentioned that to me.

KW: Yeah, I think that we're hearing a lot of that kind of comment, that students want to be able to interact directly, not over the screen. So, Francisco, what are you hearing, or what are you seeing around campus for the semester?

FA: You know, there's a lot of things that David and Ana covered already. Struggling to be focused, you know, and needing a professor in front of them to be motivating them to actually do the work, and I've heard a lot of those experiences. But one of the things that really, really affects the students is just their personal lives, in that we're in the middle of a pandemic. You know, maybe some of their family members lost their jobs or actually contracted the virus themselves, and so they're always worried. So mostly, some students do experience that you have to deal with that. And that's really one of the key things that has developed over these couple months, that more and more cases are being filed, and certain students are hit harder than the others. And so, that constant worry in their heads, you know, if they're going to get the virus, and if one of the family members is going to get the virus or is going to be affected. One of my family members is a nurse. She's already seen family members of students, because she's in contact with or she knows a lot of students that come here to Hancock. She always hears the situations they're in and how they're not able to focus as well in class because of that constant worry. And I've even had some of my friends that come to me about that and talk to me about their own experiences as similar to that.

KW: So, let's go back to Ana and see if you guys have suggestions. The college sends out text messages via Rave, and we use Canvas, and we send out emails, we use Twitter, which I understand none of the kids use Twitter, but use the Instagram, and those kinds of things. Is there something else we need to be doing for communication? What do you think we need to do to make sure that everybody understands about the resources that are available?

ARP: I think everything you're doing is great. Since I am involved, I constantly check my email because I have to, and constantly have to keep updated, but other students don't. So, I feel that you should increase how many text messages we get to more. Because I feel the way you communicate the most is through email, and a lot of students don't check their email. They're constantly on the phone, on social media, or you know, Twitter, Instagram, whatever it is. The text message pops up on their phone like right

away, and it catches your attention because it's a message, so you are, you know, more driven to click on it, reading what it's saying. So, I feel like maybe increasing more of those would help.

KW: Alright. David, what do you think would help improve some communication? What would make it easier for you and your friends?

DB: Yeah, so Ana kind of touched on this, but I feel like a good step forward would be, I mean, you guys don't need to do this, but I probably would suggest also just posting more on social media. Just for myself, you know, social media is one of the areas in which I get a lot of my information. I know, for example, I was transferring, or I'm going to transfer, and the TAG application was posted on social media with the UTC, and that's when I learned there was an extended due date. So, I feel like a good way to connect with people, at least around my age, is to post on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and just really like try to post it out there, because a lot of students can repost and share with their friends. And another thing would be with the emails, because I do get a lot of emails from Hancock, and they're very informative. But the issue with that is I also get emails from my professors, from other resources here on campus. So, I'm still trying to think of a way to incorporate the emails, I haven't come up with anything. I'm just kind of putting it out there. I really like the emails, just at times they can be a lot for students.

KW: That is a lot. Trust me, as soon as you get out of school and get going, it doesn't get any better. So, Francisco, any other thoughts about what would help us make sure we're getting messages out to students a little better?

FA: You know, Ana and David already covered so much, and so the only thing I can provide is just, be more communicative and be more connected, between your friends and teachers, professors, you know, parents as well. Because at the end of the day, everyone's trying to help you succeed. You know your professors, even your friends, your parents really want to see you succeed. And so, like, proper communication, being able to ask questions, that is a skill most people forget about. You know, being able to ask for help. I've seen it so many times even between my own family, where they're too afraid to ask for help. And that's what leads them down the drain, let's say, for lack of a better term.

KW: Interesting.

FA: So, yeah that's one piece of advice I would really, really stress to students that come up to me, you know, don't be afraid to ask for help. Don't be afraid to ask a question, you know, speak to your professors, speak to your parents. Speak to your friends. Try to be as informed as possible.

KW: I think that's good advice. So, let's talk about, you know, we're kind of talking about the struggles of campus, but let's talk about some of the good things that are going on from a student perspective and in the student interaction. And while we obviously don't get as much, and especially if you're a freshman this year, you're not really getting the sense of being on campus. But Ana, why don't you start by just giving us an idea of something that you really enjoy that's about being a college student, that isn't necessarily going to class.

ARP: I honestly enjoy meeting people, and what I think is great that we're doing right now is still being able to provide spaces for students to come on campus and do work from here. I don't think a lot of them are aware of that the library is open, and the Writing Center is open, the Math Center is open. Yes, you have to make an appointment, so they keep the social distance in place, but we're still here and they're still open and here to help you. And, like Francisco said, don't be afraid to ask for help. I feel like coming

here, that's a great way. And there's also classrooms set up around campus open to students who come, you know, to be in class here, do homework here, study here. And I think that's another great way, although we can't like really, you know, talk to each other, it's good seeing a face or, you know, being able to have interaction with other people. You know a lot of people have been indoors this whole time, so I think this is another great, you know, especially for freshmen that aren't aware, maybe they get in contact with somebody else at one of the locations and start a connection there, and maybe try to see how it is when we're not in lock down and get the sense of how college really is when this isn't happening.

KW: David, what is it you think about being in college that's nice, especially being here Hancock?

DB: Yeah, that's a good question. So at least, I think it's pretty nice how as a student I'm able to schedule my classes to where they work with my schedule. Prior to COVID, I felt like I had to go to class. I mean I'm still going to class, but I had to be on campus, and that would interfere with a lot of my personal life, because I would have meetings, I would have to take care of my sister. But now, being able to be in class and still being able to take care of my sister, that's pretty awesome. So, it really works with me at certain times. And then, even with the food distribution, I'm even allowed to work here, which is awesome, because prior, I would always have class on Thursdays, and that's when we had food distribution, so now I'm able to help. So, I'm really happy that in a way, everything kind of worked out for me.

KW: Alright. So, Francisco, this is your first fall semester on campus, and so you're maybe not getting the full excitement of interacting with students here on campus. But maybe tell us, you know, something that you've enjoyed this semester as your first full term classes started.

FA: You know, this will be somewhat relatable, but I can sleep in more. Prior to COVID, I scheduled my classes that were going to be like at eight o'clock. But because of the pandemic that changed, and so most of the classes are moved forward in the day. So, I get to enjoy like actually being able to sleep for now, like compared to back in high school and to being at school by like seven o'clock. That's one of the good things about being a college student right now. However, I understand that that may not be the case for some other students. Apart from that, some of the great experiences is actually being able to still work at the campus, you know, at food distribution and what not. That's something I've really enjoyed, but again I understand that not all students do that, but the opportunities are there. Opportunities to use the resources, like how Ana was mentioning, like the Writing Center, the Math Center, just with more limitations, more restrictions, but it's still there. At the end of the day, it's still there.

KW: You kind of sound like my son on getting up late thing, he's a high school student and he's now figured out that he only has to get up like 10 or 15 minutes before class and throw a ball cap on and turn his computer on and he's ready to go.

FA: He has the right idea.

KW: Exactly. Well, I appreciate you guys coming on. Let's do a little future casting and think about just as a final thing that's a little fun, tell us, give some thought, you know, when the pandemic's over and they actually allow Americans to travel to other countries again. Let's think about, you know, where would you like to go? So, if you could, if you can pick a place to go for, let's say for a month, you can go somewhere for a month, where would you like to go? We'll start with Ana.

ARP: That's a really good question, something that's been on my bucket list for, I don't know how long, but I really want to go to the Philippines. And you know, I've seen pictures, and it's so beautiful. Their ocean is so clear. You have so many activities. That is one place that I would love to spend a month at.

KW: That sounds awesome. David, where would you go, if you could go somewhere for a month?

DB: I would love to go to Japan, just because I feel like it's a very unique and beautiful place. Their culture is amazing. I can't even fathom about the food. I've seen pictures about the food in Japan, and it looks really, really delicious. So, if I had a choice, I would want to go there for 30 days.

KW: Nice. Francisco?

FA: You know, the first thought that occurred to me was New York City, just because like how expansive it is, how wide, how huge that area is. You'd never be bored basically. That was my first thought, however, just putting more thought into it, I would love to go see where my parents grew up in Mexico. They're from Oaxaca, and so spending a month there would be really good for me, because I can understand where their roots come from, you know, where my family's history comes from. Especially the food, too. That's the thing I'm most excited about. So yeah, I'd have to say my parent's hometown in Oaxaca, Mexico.

KW: Nice. I think you kind of shamed David and Ana, to go back and check out your roots. That's a great answer. And I can tell you, I've had the good fortune to get to go to New York several times, and you could spend a month there with no problem. I think all those places you guys said, New York City truly is the greatest city in the world, I don't know that I could live there, but man I sure like to visit there. Just to be involved in all the hustle and bustle when, you know, back in the day when there was actually hustle and bustle there. Now it sounds kind of empty. Well, thank you guys for joining us. You know we've talked a lot here at the college about changing the odds, and I feel like, you know, our mission is to change the odds for students just like you. But even more importantly, it's so rewarding to see students like you who are changing the odds for your community and for your peers, with the things that you're doing. So, we're grateful for your service and your leadership. We wish you a great semester and thank you for joining us.

FA: Thank you for having us.

ARP: Thank you for having us.

DB: Thank you so much.

KW: This has been Hancock Conversations with Student Trustee Ana Rosas Pacheco and student ambassadors David Bautista Gonzales and Francisco Avila Estevez. Thank you for joining us. Thank you for listening in, and we look forward to seeing you next time on Hancock Conversations.