Four new aspiring chefs head to culinary school in the docu-series The Freshman Class: Santa Cruz, premiering tonight, March 11th at 8:00pm ET/5:00pm PT on Cooking Channel.

Based in beautiful Santa Cruz, California in the Culinary Arts and Hospitality Management Program at Cabrillo College, these four freshmen attempt to change their lives and achieve their dreams at one of the most demanding and fast-paced culinary arts programs in America. Follow the students over eight episodes, as the series chronicles their personal lives through difficult relationships and family conflict, through homelessness and even life-threatening illness, as they take on big challenges while going through significant personal trials outside the classroom. Culinary school is difficult and offers no guarantees, and these students all desperately want to do well in the program to better their lives, but can they make it?

"Graduating culinary school can be grueling with its long hours in The Kitchen and in the classroom," said Michael Smith, General Manager and Senior Vice President, Cooking Channel. "Viewers will get to see behind the veil, at what it takes for the freshmen to fulfill their dreams at one day becoming professional chefs, through all the triumphs and heartbreaks."

In the season premiere, the new culinary students arrive at Cabrillo College's culinary program in Santa Cruz, California. Gabriel is a former gang member looking to Turn his life around after a recent stint in prison. Amalia is a stay-at-home mom of four, eager to take on new responsibilities but nervous about accepting a role other than "wife and mother." Kim regrets dropping out of culinary school decades ago and is ready to prove herself, despite her reluctant husband. And Jim is a Navy veteran, suffering with a serious injury that left him jobless and homeless 8 years ago, and is now seeking a better life. The students get right to work with their first catering class assignment, leading to a conflict between Jim and his professor. Throughout the semester the freshmen face numerous tests and challenges, but unlike most cooking schools, Cabrillo College's unique program utilizes a fully operational, student-run restaurant and catering service for students to get hands-on experience. Tensions will run high in The Kitchen as the students have to balance personal challenges amidst the chaotic process of learning the culinary ropes and chasing their dreams.

Cabrillo College is a leading California community college serving Santa Cruz County with locations in Aptos, Scotts Valley and Watsonville. It is ranked #1 in transfers to UC Santa Cruz. Founded in 1959, the college offers over 100 academic and career technical education programs that serve multiple educational goals such as A.A. and A.S. degrees, certificates of achievement, skills certificates, transfer to 4-year institutions or for lifelong learning and personal enrichment. Cabrillo College is a dynamic, diverse and responsive educational community that is dedicated to helping all students achieve their academic, career, and personal development goals.

The Freshman Class is produced by Punched in the Head Productions.