There are good reasons to continue your education.

Now your education CAN continue with the help of WATSONVILLE CENTER

I came to the U.S. when I was 15.

HIGH SCHOOL felt like college to me – my English was only at a third grade level and I spent hours with dictionaries doing my homework. But I have always loved learning new things – education is what inspires me, and the desire to help others. Through the Puente program here at Cabrillo, I’ve had the opportunity to learn in one year what would normally take three or four—visiting other universities, finding a mentor in my field of study, getting involved with college life. I’m going to be a TV anchorwoman one day, and there are many barriers that could get in my way—English, financial need, even discrimination—sometimes well-meaning people can even be discouraging. But I’m not going to let anything stop me.

Magali Valdez, planning to transfer in Journalism

I worked at Safeway for 36 YEARS, from the time I was 21 years old.

I came to the U.S. from Austria when I was thirteen. I always knew I wanted to try college one day and I took courses from time to time, but it’s hard when you’re working full time. When I retired, I decided to prepare for my CCNA certification through Cabrillo to become a computer technician. I think the community colleges do the best job at preparing students for the workforce, especially for people looking at a career change later in life. Nowadays, it’s rare to see people put in 40 years at a company. They will probably change careers more than once. Cabrillo has excellent instructors and it’s never too late to go back to school.

Alf Popp, CCNA certificate program

I was always a bright student, but I wasn’t able to go BEYOND elementary school in Mexico

because secondary school cost money and I was the oldest of 12 children in a poor family. I studied when I could at night for many years, and when I was 34 years old and expecting my youngest son, I started taking English and ECE classes at Cabrillo. Finances were the hardest part of going to school, since my husband and I both worked in the fields and didn’t earn much money. I earned my teacher’s permit through ECE and plan to finish my AA degree. My oldest son is in the Radiologic Technology program at Cabrillo, and my youngest son plans to be a doctor. I would say to anyone: “You can go to school. You have as much potential as anyone else, you just need to believe in yourself.”

Ester Zermeno, ECE student

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When I first came to the U.S., I spoke **ONLY A FEW** words of English.

My wife and I worked in the fields for 16 years. In 2003, we decided to enroll at the Cabrillo College Watsonville Center to take classes in ESL, or English as a Second Language. I also took classes in math and real estate, and my wife took classes in Early Childhood Education. The ESL classes gave me more confidence, and helped me expand my small business by communicating with people who did not speak any Spanish. Now, I'm taking classes in the regular English program. My next goal is to finish my degree in Real Estate. Coming was Cabrillo was the biggest step I have ever taken in my life.

**Jorge Ortiz, Real Estate student**

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I dropped out of high school in my senior year and didn’t think I would **EVER** be a college student.

I felt lost and frustrated, working odd jobs at minimum wage for years. My brother got me into the Watsonville Digital Bridge Academy here at Cabrillo, and for the first time I feel confident about my future. The hardest part about coming back to school was learning how to be organized and responsible, but this program made me want to learn. I even made the honor roll last semester. I found out how to be successful with my learning style and how to work with others, like forming study groups. I’ve learned that **everyone** has the capacity for leadership, which is about productive change.

**Michael Córdova, planning to major in Nursing**

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What students need to be successful in college is **commitment AND motivation.**

We have many examples of students who came with very little English or preparation, but through hard work were able to achieve their goals. One of my students waited until her children were grown to return to school. She started with no English, but she worked hard and is now one of the top nurses at Watsonville Community Hospital. The formula for success in college is 10% ability, 50% belief in self, 20% motivation and 20% commitment. Just about everyone has that first 10%, and everything else is within our control.

**Eva Acosta, counselor**

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I went back to college as an **OLDER** student and finished my first degree at 40; my second at 45.

I had to stop out and work along the way to support my family, and I understand the struggles my students face because I faced them myself. I grew up in this community and came back here to teach for Cabrillo, to show students that success in school is not a mystery beyond their reach. They have many strengths and valuable life knowledge that they can apply in class and to the literature they read—all they have to learn is the form for writing. They leave my class prepared to compete, either in higher level classes or in jobs. It’s very easy to talk yourself out of school, but the struggle is worth it in the end. No matter how long it takes, those years will pass anyway.

**Jeff Tagami, English instructor**

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Financial Aid testimonial goes **HERE.**