

A knack for design

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Kearny High student plots her future in urban planning

By Laura Farrar

Have you ever met someone who — although young — you could tell was destined for great things? Mission Valley resident and Kearny High School senior Pamela Arciniega is just such a person. Pamela is an aspiring urban planner who already has hundreds of hours of experience in design, engineering, and architecture, though she is just 18 years old.

Arciniega is a lifetime Mission Valley resident who currently lives with her father and younger brother at the Park Villas South Condominiums. She has attended neighborhood schools: John Paul Jones Elementary, Taft Middle School, and the School of Engineering, Innovation and Design (EID) at the Kearny High Educational Complex. In the fall, she will start at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo as a city and regional planning major.

Arciniega's father is an immigrant who works two jobs busing tables, and has always sought to introduce her to different cultural and educational offerings. Arciniega has seized on every opportunity to learn more about architecture and engineering, which is the focus of her high school. She is part of the ACE (Architecture, Construction, Engineering) Mentor Program. Some of her highlights in this program include working on a redesign of the old San Diego Central Library site and attending a summer camp at the College of Architecture and Planning at the University of Colorado, Denver.

At a summer camp through the National Association of Women in Construction, Arciniega worked with a team to build a shed for a school. She also designed a solar-powered charging station, large-scale urban garden, commercial airport building, and led the remodel of a classroom, conference room, and computer lab at Kearny High. Through these experiences and projects, Arciniega has learned about every phase of an architectural project from start to finish. She gets inspiration from nature and man-made structures, creates sketches and plans, uses computer-aided drafting software, and assists in the actual construction.



Pamela Arciniega (Courtesy Kearney High School)

Arciniega has a passion for giving back to her school and community. At Kearny Engineering, Innovation and Design (EID), she serves as a Student Equity Ambassador. In this role, she meets with incoming students, as well as parents, teachers, and community members to explain the unique and outstanding programs her school offers. In the redesign of the conference room at Kearny, Arciniega worked with other students to present their ideas to the school district to get approval.

"Throughout high school, I found it important to participate in projects that give back to the community of Kearny," she said.

All seniors at Kearny EID must complete a senior project that relates to architecture or engineering. In Arciniega's project, she tackled centralizing the San Diego Airport Authority through redesigning the commuter terminal as an administrative office building. She designed a plan to house in one central building departments that are not currently close to each other. She researched this through her externship at the San Diego Airport Authority. She then created her designs in a computer-aided drafting program and created a 3-D scale model. In February, she presented her project to the San Diego Unified School District Board of Education.

One of Arciniega's favorite memories of Mission Valley is when the Civita Apartment Complex opened its community park.

"It was beautiful," she said. "They had a live band playing; and how they planned the open stage, walking trails, unique playgrounds, kid fountains, water creek, and seating running along the hill was mesmerizing, which also inspired me in my pursuit as a planner."

Her externship at the San Diego Airport Authority helped her narrow her aspiration to become an airport planner. Arciniega said that her purpose as a future urban planner is to "create new spaces to make the people around me happy."

Check out this video of Arciniega presenting her senior project at the SDUSD Board of Education meeting in February: bit.ly/SDUSD2-13-18.

— Lara Farrar writes on behalf of Kearny High School where she teaches Spanish.