

# 20 community college students honored as nation's best

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*All-USA Community College Academic Team face down hardships in their pursuit of education.*



*(Photo: (Photo courtesy of Phi Theta Kappa International Honor Society))*

Staying focused enough to balance classes, extracurricular activities and a social life over four years is no easy task for students at traditional colleges, many of whom enjoy the support of parents and family members.

For the 20 students chosen for the 2015 All-USA Community College [Academic Team](#), "just" dealing with college would be simple. Overcoming drug addiction, parenting, living through years of abuse and struggling as immigrants and first generation college students are just a few of the challenges the students are dealing with while pursuing a degree. And in many cases, a lifelong dream.

"I don't feel like a great inspirational person," says Sarah Taha, an Iraqi immigrant who came to the U.S. after her father was murdered. "I have power and I need to use it. If everyone thought this way, the world would be changing."

Taha joins 19 others in receiving the honor -- which comes with a \$2,500 scholarship -- presented by the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society and is designed to recognize 20 two-year college students from across the USA who display an outstanding combination of academic achievement and community service.

Sponsored by Follett Higher Education Group, with support from the American Association of Community Colleges, this year's winners -- who must have been nominated by his or her college -- were chosen from a pool of more than 1,500 students nominated by more than 800 community colleges.

## **The 2015 All-USA Community College Academic Team:**

Helene Alt, Hillsborough (FL) Community College/Dale Mabry Campus

Mason Buran, Montgomery (MD) College/Rockville Campus

Brianna DiSanza, Germanna Community College/Fredericksburg (VA) Campus

Macie Gillock, Redlands Community College, El Reno, OK

Brandon Hayes, Walters State Community College, MorristownTN

Valerie Le Grande, Mesa (AZ) Community College/Southern/Dobson Campus

Rachel Lee, Reading (PA) Area Community College

Karen Meacham, Tarrant County (TX) College/Southeast Campus

Anastassiya Neznanova, LaGuardia Community College, Long Island City, NY

Quan Nguyen, Bunker Hill Community College, Boston, MA

Zeinab Nouredine, Miami Dade (FL) College, InterAmerican Campus

Audua Pugh, North Hennepin Community College, Brooklyn Park, MN

Rhonda Richardsen, Bergen Community College, Paramus, NJ

Aaron Rosengarten, Northampton (PA) Community College, Main Campus

Jhoalmo Sibrian, Tarrant County (TX) College, Southeast Campus

Andrew Sypher, Mesa (AZ) Community College/Red Mountain Campus

Sarah Taha, San Diego (CA) Mesa College

Tricia Wildman, SUNY Suffolk (NY) County Community College/Michael J. Grant Campus

Ashley Williams, Illinois Valley Community College, Oglesby, IL

David Yama, South Seattle (WA) College/South Campus

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