

## The New Kid in Town by Marcus Zimmerman



What's a kid to do during a summer of Covid-19 closures? The answer is that there are many opportunities out there, but it will take some searching and creativity to find a program or activity that's right for you. While traditional summer camps are closed and team sports are still on a forced hiatus, there are numerous alternatives to staying holed-up at home watching TV or playing video games.

If you want to prevent "summer brain drain," or just want to get ahead, you could take online summer school at LAUSD, a local private school, or at various online schools such as APEX Learning, Opportunities for Learning, or National University Virtual High School. If you're more ambitious and want to get a head-start on college, you could challenge yourself by taking an online class through the Los Angeles City College network, the UC and Cal State system, or from one of the many colleges or universities across the country. For those on a budget, city college is a great option since it's free to high school students. The other alternatives are pricey but provide the opportunity to sample courses at your dream school.

If you're looking for non-academic courses, there's plenty of choices there too. For example, you could fine-tune your art skills through the Idyllwild Arts Summer Online Program or your singing skills through Soundcheck Artists. Or if you're looking to learn a new language, you could

download the free DuolingoApp, or enrol in one of the numerous structured online language programs. You could also be creative and start a blog, a YouTube channel, take up a new hobby or make crafts, sewing projects, and artwork at home.

In addition, if you want to volunteer this summer, there are things you can do even though you likely won't be able to volunteer in-person at a facility. For starters, volunteering can include even small acts of kindness, such as helping an elderly neighbor by offering to bring in their mail, walking their dog, calling on the phone or doing a virtual computer visit. Alternatively, there's a current boom in virtual volunteer opportunities and many nonprofits are utilizing the help of virtual volunteers. You could use such platforms to explore your passions, from environmental conservation, to reproductive rights, to alleviating worldwide hunger. Check with search engines like Idealist.org or VolunteerMatch.org to find something that's right for you.

You can also call your local hospital, library, senior center, etc. to see if there is something you can do remotely. It just takes some leg work but there are many options available.

So, don't use Covid-19 as an excuse to sit at home and do nothing!

## HAS THE LAUSD GRADING POLICY AFFECTED STUDENT MOTIVATION? GUEST COLUMN

By: Anastasia Zubkoff

On Monday, April 13th, 2020, LAUSD superintendent Austin Beutner announced that no student would be issued an "F" on their report card. "Students can work to improve their grades," he announced in an update. Mr. Beutner went on to say that he does not want to "penalize" students struggling with technology and home life.

The announcement was made to help students make the virtual switch as easy as possible, especially since LAUSD would not reopen its campuses to any students for the remainder of the school year. The policy was also made for students struggling at home and dealing with technology issues. However, this new policy has been critiqued for letting students feel like they no longer need to try to succeed in school.

Patricia Lacour, an 8th grade United States History teacher at Millikan Middle School, says that there are both negatives and positives to this new policy. She thinks it gives students an easy way to NOT do assignments. However, she also believes there are students who have "complex home situations" and that this policy will be their "saving grace". She went on to say that the policy has affected her grading policy and made grades on assignments more of a participation grade rather than a real one.

Students too, have many thoughts on this grading policy and how it affects their motivation. Jordan Acosta is an eighth grader attending Millikan Middle School and will be culminating this June. She believes she has an obligation to continue

working hard in school to be prepared for the rigors of high school. She notes that it has been difficult learning virtually because it is harder to reach out to teachers about assignments or lessons. Frances Suavillo, the student representative on the Board of Education, notes that she does not think students should be expected to give 100% of their efforts during these unprecedented times.

For students who feel they need extra practice in certain academic areas, LAUSD will be offering summer classes to all. They will offer credit recovery/intervention programs, enrichment classes, and core classes for grades pre-K through 12. Teacher Patricia Lacour says, "Summer school is a great idea! Any opportunity for teachers and students to practice this new learning format is beneficial, especially if the actual classroom format is not an option in the fall."

During the COVID-19 pandemic, students and teachers have had to adapt to this new way of learning. LAUSD has provided resources and has tried to take pressure off the students by implementing new grading policies. While there has been criticism about how this may have harmed student's motivation, for some, this policy will mean the world.

As the school year closes, Patricia Lacour wants students to know that school isn't solely about curriculum, but about growing and becoming a better person. "We should never stop learning. We need to be open to change and accept differences. Different is not bad, it's just different. We can learn so much from differences."

## Education

### STUDIO CITY RESIDENT IS THE YOUNGEST GRADUATE IN CAL STATE LA'S CLASS OF 2020

by Stephen Phenow

Alexis Kam has dreams. These are of the future, where buildings help create a healthy productive environment. Kam believes through innovative design and sustainable engineering it will help make the world a better place and help improve people's lives. While this is a lofty ambition, Kam is more than up to the task.

The 17-year-old, Kam graduated in May with a Bachelor degree of Science in Mechanical Engineering from the College of Engineering, Computer Science, and Technology at Cal State LA as the youngest in her class. She will begin an assignment as a design engineer with ACCO Engineered Systems in Pasadena experienced in environmental design to help make her dream come true.

Kam believes with current climate change and global warming, she has a responsibility to use her design skills to help raise awareness about energy conservation and other environmental issues.

As a child, Kam considered becoming a doctor and pursuing a career in health care. Later she realized she could help people and still make a difference in other ways.

She was 12 years old when she enrolled at the university through the Early Entrance Program. This program, which has accepted highly gifted students as young as 11 years old, is administered by the Honors College at Cal State LA.

There she worked part-time as a machine shop/mechanical design assistant and as an instructional student assistant for two statics courses. Kam also participated in the university's Autonomous Underwater Vehicle (AUV) project. This is a small robotic submarine designed to navigate underwater obstacle courses.

For her senior project, she led a team of four Cal State LA students in

designing a small-scale of office building for energy efficiency research. The project aimed to reduce energy usage by testing different wall materials and configurations, as well as to maximize the efficiency of the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning system.

Alexis Kam was said to be an outstanding student and her undergraduate records would corroborate it according to Professor Arturo Pacheco-Vega, who was Kam's faculty advisor on the senior design project. Kam's commitment, her sense of responsibility, and discipline was crucial for her achieving her success.

Besides a Dean's List student, Kam is a recipient of a Boeing Student Scholarship, an Elliott R. Barton Scholarship, a Theodore W. Nye and Ann M. Nye Scholarship, and a STEM Advantage Scholarship. She also volunteered for Heal the Bay and the Friends of Ballona Wetlands, working on projects to help keep coastal waters safe and clean.

Kam also helped start the Association for Women in Science at Cal State LA, which she says is one of her major accomplishments. As a member of the organization's executive board, she encouraged students who were women to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). They organized presentations and workshops and participated in networking and career and research opportunities.

For now, Kam is looking forward to her next challenge. She will pursue her ambition of building a more sustainable future at ACCO Engineered Systems.



Photo by Ty Washington/Cal State LA

## FALL OPEN UNIVERSITY AT CSUN

If you're a community member or a student at any college or university, you can take a class at California State University, Northridge through Open University. The Open University program allows anyone not already registered at CSUN to take an academic-credit class in the fall and spring semesters. Students can choose from more than 6,100 classes, all offered in a

virtual format. That means no matter where they live or work, students can take an online class so long as they meet course prerequisites and there is space in the class. Fall 2020 weekday classes start Aug. 24, and Open University registration starts Aug. 31. For more info and to review the class schedule: <https://go.csun.edu/fallopen>