

# The San Diego Union-Tribune

## Nonprofit organization promotes educational turn in Barrio Logan

By Maria Gonzalez Amarillo | 3 pm Aug. 29, 2015



Francisco Martinez (left) and student BLCI Jose Cruz, executive director. Maria Gonzalez Yellow

Barrio Logan College Institute was born in 1996 in order to train and motivate neighborhood students to go to college, some of them, the first in their families to access this level. With that sought that could access positions of power and work take decisions on behalf of their families, their community and society itself.

The project that began twenty years ago with two third graders, now has 366 students from over 50 schools. Most of the funds are private and come from individuals, businesses, foundations and also has a satellite program in Chula Vista.

In addition to offering activities during weekends and summer programs Barrio Logan College Institute, or BLCI, are held on weekdays after school and are divided into: the program for elementary students, in which you want establish a strong educational base; The high school, focusing on personal development; the high school, which helps students find the right college according to its objectives; and the College Success program, which advises them to apply for and financial assistance and allows the BLCI track your college career.

The organization also requires parents to work 30 hours a year with the organization cleaning, cooking for children and attending workshops that teach the American education system, how to manage your funds, use of a computer and all sorts of useful skills contribute to the cultural development of the district.

"I entered the BLCI in 2009 and came across a magnificent portfolio of programs. I myself lived with the resources of a single parent family and was the first to study with the support of people who believed in me. The university changed me and made me realize that as a human being and to the systems created by ourselves, I could also inspire and work with others to promote a change in Latino communities, "says Jose Cruz, executive director of BLCI.

The organization started sending students to college in 2004. The average success in its purpose is one hundred percent: all students who go through the school program of BLCI enter college, of which 89 per percent and have graduated or are on track to do so, resulting in 36 students with college degree 124 which are in the process.

"It's a strong average but we're working to make all of them finish their university studies. Once outside, we must find creative ways to keep focused, "says Cruz.

All those attending the programs of the organization are Latinos because 90 percent of the neighborhood's residents belong to this ethnic group. Families, most immigrants and children born in the United States parents are very supportive of the BLCI.

"People see us employees as the key example of the benefits of the program to also be the first in our family to have studied. And then we associate with students. For example, Panchito and I just had a meeting to find a larger space for the organization because we are growing, "said the CEO.

Panchito is the alias of Francisco Martinez, a 17 year old student who has attended the BLCI since fourth grade and now begin college at San Diego State University with a grant of \$ 30,000. Martinez has actively collaborated with the CEO of the organization to create the program Executive Director's Leadership Council (LCDD).

"The reason for launching the leadership program was based on wanting to help potential leaders BLCI to go to college and come back to continue contributing to change and educational development of the community. I am excited with the direction I'm taking to go to study and work here [in the BLCI] together, "says the young man.

The LCDD was implemented from September 2014 until early summer of this year as a pilot program in which four outstanding students will be educated in school. These, along with Martinez and two other students that exercise of president and vice president, will become part of the team that imparts leadership program in its next edition, the dates and duration are to be confirmed.

"The origin of this program is an interesting story," says Cruz. "A year ago Panchito began to question why he had to go to college. Only had a vision that you can provide more money. When I explained how the university changed my life, she felt more inspired and, together, create the LCDD to convey the right message to students who may have the same doubts as him. "

"I do not consider a materialistic person," Martínez affirms. "I value people more than money but Joseph made me see that the university would help me learn about myself, my passions, my strengths and how to apply them; and the problems and how to help the community, which is what I really want to do. It gave me a different value on the university. "

For more information, visit

[blci.org](http://blci.org) .

*González Amarillo is a freelance journalist.*