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CHICO STATE

Re-entry student comes back to school to help others thrive

By **Dani Anguiano**
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CHICO » Daniel Caravez was helping his girlfriend with her homework one evening when he started thinking that maybe he should go back to school.

“I remember her coming back home with homework and I

thought, ‘If I’m helping her, maybe I should be in school!’” Caravez said.

Going to school had always been Caravez’s plan; it just took him a little longer than he expected to get there. Caravez, now 31, was born in Mexico and moved to San Mateo at the age of seven. He did well in school and had a passion for education at an early age. He briefly attended

college after graduating from high school, but after his first year he had to leave school and begin working full time in order to support himself.

As he worked construction jobs throughout California and Washington, the thought of attending college was never far from his mind, he says. In 2011 he decided to attend Butte College along-

side his girlfriend who would eventually become his wife. He found his classes in Spanish and math engaging and in 2013 transferred to Chico State University to continue his studies.

“I knew I wanted to go back to school,” Caravez said about his decision to attend Butte College. “I liked it there. I really liked all my classes and

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Daniel Caravez received a scholarship from the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at a recent banquet.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Student

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I was ready.”

Now Caravez is slated to graduate in spring 2017 with majors in math education, Spanish and Latin American studies. At 31, he’s a re-entry student, older than many of his peers and with more life, and job, experience than

those around him.

Being a re-entry student can come with a host of challenges, but Caravez says returning to school as an older, more experienced student has allowed him to thrive.

“I’m much more focused,” Caravez said. “I know what I want.”

He knows what he wants now, but that hasn’t always been the case, Caravez said.

After graduating from

high school, he attended school in his hometown at the College of San Mateo in where he played football. In his first year at the school, his parents moved to Corning and the first-generation college student struggled to stay focused in school without the support system of his family.

He started working and eventually left school to work full-time in San Mateo and Tracy. Caravez briefly moved to Corning to attend Butte College while working but found he wasn’t ready.

He went back to work and

after another stint in construction in Washington, he came back to the north state where he would meet his future wife, a student at Butte College. After work he would often help her with homework and that’s when he realized he was ready to go back to school.

“At first I had no clue what I wanted to do, but then I started looking into math and Spanish,” Caravez said. “I didn’t want to stop taking any of those classes.”

He didn’t. He continued with Spanish and math courses, eventually earning

an associate’s degree from Butte College before transferring to Chico State where he realized he had enough prerequisites to complete a major in Latin American studies along with math and Spanish.

Now at Chico State, he’s thrived, he said. He’s enjoyed the faculty, the campus and the opportunities.

“I really like it,” Caravez said. “I like the campus — it’s really friendly — and I’ve had a lot of good professors.”

Along with his studies, he assists in a calculus class

helping students as they go through the course.

“It’s nice that I get to help people,” Caravez said. “People come up and thank me for the help and it’s just a feeling I can’t explain, and I guess that’s a part of the joy of teaching.”

He attends Chico State alongside his wife, also a math education major. Caravez hopes to become a high school educator, teaching math and possibly Spanish as well, while his wife plans to teach math at a junior high. He also wants to attend graduate school.

Caravez was recently awarded a nearly \$2,000 scholarship for re-entry students from the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, which he says will help him continue to finance his studies until he graduates in fall 2017 or spring 2018.

It’s been a long journey for Caravez, he said, but he’s proud of what he’s accomplished and has even inspired his brothers and friends to go to school.

“I’ve always had a passion for education. I knew that was why I, and my parents, came to this country,” Caravez said, adding his parents are proud of what he has accomplished. “My mom always tells me, ‘you guys are doing it and it feels like I’m the one who is doing it too.’”

That passion is what inspired him to be a teacher and continues to inspire him to remind family and friends that it’s never too late to go to school.

“Over Christmas I was talking to a friend about this, he was looking to me for answers,” Caravez said. “I told him, ‘there’s no thinking about it, just do it.’ If he needs any help, I’m going to help him because I’ve done this.”

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