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Uniondale student board member Randdy Acosta bridges student district gap

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Randdy Acosta

COURTESY UNIONDALE SCHOOL DISTRICT

By Stacy Driks

Uniondale High School senior Randdy Acosta entered his final year of high school Sept. 1 with a new responsibility: representing his classmates on the Uniondale Board of Education.

The position gives him an opportunity to bring students' concerns and ideas directly to district leadership.

The role adds to an already packed schedule. Acosta works part time, participates in band and athletics and takes college-level and Advanced Placement courses.

During his junior year, he took five AP classes while participating in Hofstra University's Uniondale pathway program and an engineering program. He finished the year with a 104 average.

His connection to Uniondale High School also runs through his family. His mother immigrated from the Dominican Republic and attended the high school from 2003 to 2006, where teachers helped her learn English. Twenty-one years after she graduated, her son is preparing to receive his own Uniondale diploma.

The Herald spoke with Acosta about representing students, his goals for the school year and what drives him.

Q:What do you want to accomplish as the student board member?

Acosta: Something that I really want to push is informing people and help to bridge the gap between teachers and the staff. I want to make sure that people are informed, but they're informed in a healthy way, because sometimes there are miscommunications between teachers and students.

Q:What have you already worked on for students?

Acosta: Something I really worked hard for this summer was early dismissal. The school tried to take it away, and they had their reasons, but I worked super hard to get it back, super hard. My senior class was happy about it. This was an example to bridge the communication between a student and an administrator.

Q:How did you get the school administration to approve early dismissal?

Acosta: People wanted to know why and why they thought they should have it. So what I did is I talked to some of the people in my class – we have a group chat where everyone in my graduating class is in it, and they asked me questions and talked to people outside of that. I set up a meeting with a few administrators, and I talked to the Assistant Principal, Janine Bradley, Mr. Ortiz, I talked to Dr. Akil, the superintendent of schools, I talked to Principal Dr. Brown and together, we worked to make compromises. We helped to resolve solutions or concerns. And I said, okay, here's this and this, and this is where we could find some common ground in a way that students can still have the opportunity to get early dismissal without being removed completely.

Q:Beyond building bridges, what do you think students need?

Acosta: We're working on student parking – student parking came from another student, Kaori Robbins. And as student board member I can push your ideas, and you can have your own goals and ask 'is this a reasonable request' and I'll help. Kaori and Valentina Goris – previous board member – worked a little bit on it. And when she graduated Kaori and I have talked about it. Now they're planning on having a senior student parking area when you enter the visitor's lot. You'll have a monthly fee and then you'll have your own parking designated to you.

Q:You were in a Hofstra program, tell me a little about that.

Acosta: There is a trip to Hofstra where you visit the campus and meet the professors. After this was an orientation and you had to submit an online application. After the application, there's a group interview. And after the group interview, you get selected. So, they selected me out of, I think it was, maybe 150, 200 kids that applied for it or were interested in it. And I was super happy. I do it with a lot of my friends. And honestly it's amazing.

Q:With the program do you collect transferable credits?

Acosta: Each class is three transferable credits once I graduate, I'll have these six credits and whatever other credits I take in high school. Because Uniondale offers a

whole lot of dual enrollment classes. I hope to graduate with a good amount of AP courses and then a good amount of college credits.

Q:How do you balance school, the board and your other activities?

Acosta: Everything starts with mapping out what I know is coming and what will come on my phone calendar. I'll see what overlaps, what is more important than the other. It's definitely knowing how to prioritize and how to manage the time that you have and know what you need at this point. I know when I got closer to APs, I need to prioritize my AP courses. And make sure I do well because it's something that's going to help me in the future.

Q:What do you want your classmates to know about you as their representative?

Acosta: I want everyone to know that I'm the same as you. I've been in your shoes. And just because I'm a student board member doesn't mean that I'm on top of you. I just want to boost the connectivity of my grade and of the whole school because I represent my whole district.