Speaker 1: She is a Sociology Major and she's transferring to Cal Poly Pomona. Psychology Major, English Major, she's transferring to UC Santa Cruz.

Liesel: Welcome to The Magic Mountie podcast, this is a podcast that's dedicated to helping faculty and other college employees as they try to navigate the challenging fabric of serving students, especially at Mount San Antonio college. But everyone's welcome.

Christina: Hi it's Christina. I'm proud to present to you a sneak peek into the DREAM program's unique, and I must say, very heart warming and supportive graduation of 2019. As our last episode for the season, we'll be taking just a small break so you can focus on your last days of the semester and catch up on episodes you may have missed.

Christina: The amazing DREAM program provides support, services to DREAMers, also known as undocumented students at Mt. SAC. Its purpose is to increase the personal growth and development of dream students through academic, career, and personal counseling, peer mentoring, assistance in applying for the California Dream Act financial aid, scholarship opportunities and workshops regarding DACA and other issues relative to this student population.

Christina: And we learn in this episode that they will also have the help of a dedicated lawyer who's speaks to the graduates at this very special event. Enjoy.

Heidi Lockhart: So my name is Heidi Lockhart, I'm Director of the honor's program and I'm here at the Dream year end event because I support our DREAMers on campus. They inspire me every day and I believe that everyone, no matter who they are, deserves the opportunity to have a higher education and to see our DREAM students be so successful and I wish them all the best in their next endeavors, can't wait to see what they do.

Silver Calzada: Hi, my name is Silver Calzada, I'm one of the counselors here at Mt. San Antonio college and I'm here contributing to the DREAM celebration dinner that we're having and it's just a beautiful event. Even to see the brochure with all of the pictures of the students, it's just super sweet. But this population is so deserving to be honored this way because of all the challenges that they have, and so I just want to say congratulations to the DREAMER class of 2019.

Elmer Rodriguez: Good afternoon everyone, my name is Elmer Rodriguez, and I am the coordinator of the DREAM program, welcome. Bienvenidos. We're really excited, where's my class of 2019, awesome, welcome.

Elmer Rodriguez: So the dream is real right, that is the theme for today. We always hear our students say “the struggle is real” we always here that, the struggle is real. The students are struggling to eat, struggling to do so many things. So we were talking the other day, and we were like" the dream is real", it came out and we were like "that's it, that is what we're going to use for the theme for this year ceremony". And the dream is real, the reality is our students are graduating, our students are transferring, our students are accomplishing so many things.

Elmer Rodriguez: Many people say “ DREAMers: why do they use that word they're just dreaming.” No, this is our reality and that's why to make sure today we let everybody know, that's why we chose this theme because our students are thriving regardless of everything that they go through. This class is one of the class that has the highest GPA for this year, and it's one of the one that has been the most involved in the honors program as well.

Elmer Rodriguez: Thank you everyone and now I would like to ask Dr. Eric Lara to please come up and do the welcome on behalf of the college.

Dr. Eric Lara: So welcome once again my name is Eric Lara, I'm the Associate Dean for students success and equity here at Mt. San Antonio college and I just want to welcome everybody tonight, especially all of our students, our families, our parents, it's a great honor to be here once again. I also want to give a very special welcome to the family of Luis Sanchez, who is here with us today. If you were not able to make it earlier today we had a very special tree planting ceremony in honor of Luis, the tree is planted in front of the equity center, in front of 16E, so please take the time to walk over and pay some respect to Luis and we want to thank you for being here.

Dr. Eric Lara: With that I want to congratulate the students for your hard work, all the dedication you put in. Again class of 2019 we are sad to see you leave, but you know that this is home, we will always be here for you, anything you ever need from us, please come on back, the door is always open.

Dr. Eric Lara: I also want to say in espanol. Para los papás, la familia, que esta aqui ahora. Nosotros vamos aqui, no lo mas estudiantes sino por su puedes esta tambien. El los fuerco que ustedes ponen todos dias por estudiantes por la familia, los hijos, los hermanos, hermanas, gracias por todo que hacen ustedes. Estamos aqui,[Spanish 00:05:02]. Es unas fuerco, muy grande de todo la familia y nostotros tambien somos familia. Todos aqui somos familia, gracias por [Spanish] nosotros, que pasen muy buenos noches esta noche con e ceremonia y le pasa Elmer.

Elmer Rodriguez: Thank you Eric.

Speaker 8: Hello everyone, as Dr. Lara mentioned earlier, we did have a celebration of life earlier for Luis Sanchez, we would like for everyone to just take a moment of silence in honor of Luis. Thank you so much.

Speaker 8: Today as we honor everyone who is graduating and/or transferring we would like to bring up his family so that they could receive the certificate on Luis's behalf, it is a certificate of completion to symbolize his graduating and his transfer. So if his family would come up and receive his certificate on his behalf.

Elmer Rodriguez: So I am privileged and honored to actually introduce to you, our new attorney that is going to be working in the DREAM program, Elizabeth Mateo, so Liz you can please stand. So Liz...the college has provided funding for the next three years for us to have a lawyer sitting in our building, so which is a big deal because our student needs legal support. They will come to me to ask me legal questions, and I will tell them "I'm not a lawyer, disclaimer, disclaimer, sign right here, sign there, I'm not a lawyer". So we're now going to have an actual lawyer in our building. And now Elizabeth is actually going to tell us a little bit about her, she's going to say a few words of wisdom to all of you and also how she got to actually become an attorney.

Elizabeth Mateo: Hola todos, buenas tardes. [Spanish 00:07:14]

Elizabeth Mateo: Good afternoon everyone thank you so much for inviting me today to be a part of the celebration congratulations to all the graduates and congratulations to all the parents as well, the families, the professors, the staff, everyone who has supported the students to get to this milestone. It really does take a lot of people, a lot of support. I'm a product of community college as well, so I know that very well.

Elizabeth Mateo: Again my name is Elizabeth Mateo, I'm an attorney, and I'm also a DREAMer. As I mentioned, I'm a product of community college, I went to community college, I went to Santa Monica College a few years ago and then transferred to a four year university, Cal State, Northridge, from which I graduated in 2008. Being an undocumented student presents many challenges as some of you know very well, so I commend you all for all your hard work, for not giving up.

Elizabeth Mateo: A bit about myself. I was born and raised, up until the age of 14, in Oaxaca, Mexico. I graduated from high school in 2002, so if you do the math you know my age. I graduated only a few months after AB 540 became a law. So at the time of my graduation I had no idea that one, there were so many other students like myself who were undocumented and two, that now we could pay in-state tuition. That legislators, that community members had fought so that students, like myself who were undocumented, could go to state colleges and universities and pay in-state tuition.

Elizabeth Mateo: So the next few years for me were any thing but easy, I had to travel by bus two to three hours to get to CSUN. I had to work full time while going to college full time, there were very few scholarship that were open to undocumented students, there were no DREAM resource centers, there were very few people that knew what to do to help students like myself, even though they wanted to, they just didn't know how.

Elizabeth Mateo: We had to fight very hard to become more visible, to have our needs met and just to not be afraid to demand... to essentially be treated like any other student on campus. But along the way I met amazing professors, amazing faculty and staff that helped me, that helped many of my friends who were also undocumented. I made great friends who are still rooting for me and for whom I'm still rooting for.

Elizabeth Mateo: I was very lucky to have found people who believed in me, and many times believed in me more than I believed in myself. Those people helped me navigate so many things, so many systems, the higher education systems, the immigration system, everything. And as cliché as it may sound it does take a village to not only raise a child, but to make sure that that child succeeds and thrives in life.

Elizabeth Mateo: With so much work and so much sacrifice from so many people, not just myself, but first and foremost my parents, my family, I graduated from law school in 2016. I took the Bar Exam the very next year in February, and actually this past May 12, was the two year anniversary of me finding out that I passed the Bar. That same year in June I was sworn in as an attorney and last year I opened my own practice. I am an immigration attorney, but I also represent people who get hurt in the job. So I represent people in their immigration cases, and their work injury cases. And for me it is such a privilege to be able represent families, especially low income families, low income people. And be able to help them stay in this country, be able to help them fight and win their cases sometimes their deportation cases, sometimes I'm able to help them become citizens or get legal permanent residency or just apply for DACA or to get them compensated when they ger hurt in their job.

Elizabeth Mateo: I am able to do all of that because one day I decided to just march into my community college with nothing but my high school diploma in hand and with one question to a counselor, what do I do to enroll in this school? That's what you need many times, that's the process for you to become a successful andn thriving individual. All you need to do is ask many times, all you need to do is knock on doors. And that sounds easy, but it isn't, because you're going to find people, you're going to find situations where people are going to tell you that you can't do something because of X, Y, and Z, because of your immigration status.

Elizabeth Mateo: Don't listen to them. The most important thing is that you have to believe in yourself, you have to believe in your ability to make all your dreams a reality. If you have an idea, or you have a dream just fight for it. No matter how crazy that dream may sound, I've always wanted to become an attorney, and I told my parents since I was a little kid, that I wanted to become an attorney. My parents have a sixth grade education but to me they are the wisest, the most amazing individuals ever.

Elizabeth Mateo: My parents never said no, we lived in a very poor town, my parents were hardly making ends meet, but they never said no you're not going to become an attorney. And when we moved to this country I had to learn English, at the age of 14, I didn't have any friends, I didn't have a lot of knowledge about how to navigate the education system in this country. I came from a school that had 300 students, total, to a high school that had almost 3,000 students. So it was culture shock for me, but I was very lucky again to find people that believed in myself. And again no matter how crazy your dream may sound if you want to become an attorney, you want to become a surgeon, you want to become President of some big company, you can do that. Just don't let anyone say no, don't listen to them when they say no.

Elizabeth Mateo: The good things in life are possible through hard work, sacrifice, and a lot of love for what you want to do in life. So the only thing that I can say to you today is congratulations, go out there, work hard, have fun and continue to do what you're doing because that hard work, that determination, that sacrifice is what has gotten you to this place. And never forget where you're coming from, because these people right here, I've been at Mt. SAC for one day, this is my first day here, and I can see how much love and how much dedication this staff, and the faculty have for their students and to me that's amazing. I was almost in tears, earlier today, just seeing the celebration of life for Luis and the amazing things that the students were doing, and the faculty was doing, and the things that they are doing here today for you.

Elizabeth Mateo: So again go out there, work as hard as you can, don't ever forget your dreams, if it doesn't happen next year, if it doesn't happen in a few years, just continue working towards that. I wanted to become an attorney before the age of 30, I am 34, I became an attorney two years ago. And to me it was devastating when I couldn't go to law school right after I graduated college. I cried so much but my mom never let me give up, and I didn't give up myself. So that is the most important thing, again congratulations [Spanish 00:14:35].

Elmer Rodriguez: So when someone says you're not going to make it, what do you do? You work hard right? You're going to say you proved them wrong. We're really privileged again to have Liz, we're the first community college to actually have an attorney in house so this is, we always.... And it's not a competition or anything, we're just very blessed to have so much support from our President, Vice President, to our Board of Trustees. So really, we really, thank you, all of you for making this happen. The administration here is amazing, and I always keep bragging about that because some of my peers at other colleges, you know, it's not the same. So I thank all of you for that, thank you Eric and everybody else. Thank you.

Christina: And now just a few words of gratitude and encouragement from the dream graduates.

Speaker 10: I want to take the time to thank everyone who was my mentor. Because I wouldn't be here before you if it wasn't for them. People from the dream program like mi Lauraita, mi Elmer, transfer center, where's my Lupita, mi Lupita. Jessie, gracias, Meli, gracias, Heidi from the honors. Silver, todos mis mentores y mis mentoras. Le estoy muchas gracias de verdad de todo corazon nostaria aqui levandame sin no fuera por ustedes. Gracias.

Speaker 11: I had the opportunity today to meet with Lupita and I kind of told her my game plan on where I wanted to go, and she hit me with “You should transfer to a UC” and that was like...that never... I never thought of... Thank you Lupita for letting me realize that and for pushing me to do that. Second of all, I don't see her here, but I would want to thank Mary Beth, when I came to Mt. SAC she's the first person to help me out. The first couple of semesters I was paying everything out of my own pocket, 600 dollars a semester, whatever it was, and she opened my eyes to the help that there is for someone like me. And I just want everyone to know that the help's out there, you just have to get educated, you really have to just ask for the help and people are going to help you out. Don't let anyone tell you that you can't do it.

Speaker 12: Work your butt off, try your best and never give up because that's the only way you're going to get to where you want to be. Fellow graduates, congrats and we're going to keep doing this because we're DREAMers and we can do this as a team.

Speaker 13: First and foremost I want to give thanks to God and the honor and glory to Him first. To my mom who's in heaven, she's my Guardian Angel, she taught me to be perseverant and resilient and to keep moving forward no matter what. My dad, who's in Missouri right now, who always told me to focus on my education, to be wise, and to have self love and self respect no matter what. And that I just want to make my parents proud because all you guys know our parents came here from our home countries, I'm from Chile, they just wanted to bring us a better future. So we do this for them too you know? The struggle's real but the dream is bigger.

Dr. Beta Meyer: Hi DREAMers, my name is Dr. Beta Meyer, and I am an anatomy and physiology professor and a STEM faculty mentor up in the STEM center. I can not tell you how thrilled I am to see this class, this class is amazing. I've had some of you in my class, your GPA is high, your enthusiasm is fantastic, and you are facing so many challenges, so bravely, with so much talent, that you really reflect well on your families, yourself, and your heritage. I totally understand what it's like to be in country with a parent, maybe who wasn't born here, yourself not born here, because that's my situation as well. I'm going to tell you hang tight you will get all your dreams you just need to keeping finding your path, and finding your way and finding your champions.

Dr. Beta Meyer: Anytime you want to come by, see me I am a big champion of DREAM students, and I'm in the biology building. Much love, congratulations.

Kelly Pena: My name is Kelly Peña I'm a student here at Mt. SAC. I am actually an ally here in the DREAM community. I work at the DREAM program, so it's a really awesome privilege, but I just want to say to everybody who's listening or who's out there, to don't give up on your dreams. I know there was many times where I thought that I wasn't going to transfer or wasn't going to graduate, it was never going to happen to me, and slowly you meet these people in your life who keep reassuring you that you're going to make it and that you're going to be okay.

Kelly Pena: If this sheds any light to anybody just know that you're going to be okay, you just need to find help and ask for help and everything is going to be fine. So I'm finally graduating and I'm finally transferring to Cal Poly Pomona and I'm just super excited for the next chapter in my life.

Kristina A.: My name is Kristina Allende, and I teach in the English department and I'm here tonight... I came to this event last year and it's something that I really believe in. I love that this program allows students who sometimes maybe don't feel as confident when they come to college, or don't feel as maybe important and this program shows them that they are those things. So that's why I wanted to come and then one of my students was here, Cindy Moreno, so I was really excited to see her and I just want Cindy, as well as all of the other students graduating and transferring, to know just like so many people said today, just keep your eye on the dream and if you do that, you will succeed.

Liesel: Hey, thanks so much for joining us for The Magic Mountie podcast. We love your likes, we love your shares, and we love your comments. So please engage with our community, download from wherever you love to get your podcasts, iTunes, Google, Rate My Professor, we're there and we want you to be back with us next week. Remember any opinions that are expressed in this podcast do not necessarily represents Mt. San Antonio College or any of it's agents.

Speaker 2: We'll see you next time.