

Announcer: Welcome to Hancock Conversations. Join President Dr. Kevin G Walters and explore the stories behind the people and places that make Hancock the unique hub for learning that it is today.

Kevin Walthers: Hello, and welcome to Hancock Conversations. I'm Superintendent/ President Kevin Walters. And this is your place for all things Allan Hancock College. And today, we're joined by our Student Body President, Samantha Martinez. Hi, Samantha.

Samantha Martinez: Hi, Dr. Walthers.

KW: So Samantha's a student here at Hancock, obviously. She's the student body president. She's a political science major. She's the founder, and president of the Active Minds Club, a mental wellness club for students, and she's also, interning in the marketing department over at CoastHills Credit Union, so we're happy to have, one of her colleagues from CoastHills here, kind of sitting over there and watching from the side.

SM: Hi, Selena.

KW: So Samantha, why don't you tell us a little bit about yourself growing up and where you came from and-

SM: Sure. So I'm Santa Maria, born and raised. I had the opportunity to attend local schools in the area. I went to Orcutt schools throughout elementary school and junior high and even throughout high school. And that was just an awesome experience, an opportunity to get involved right off the bat, which we'll get more into, how I really got into student government and leadership, in general. And yeah, I live here at home with my parents. My mom is an immigrant from Chihuahua, Mexico and I live at home with my parents, my two brothers, and my grandma, and our new cat. So a lot of people in the house, but, they are just my biggest support and they uplift me in everything I do, which is just so awesome and I'm so grateful.

KW: It's fun when you're doing stuff on campus and your parents show up. That's always, your parents are super friendly and very nice people and, so it's just nice that they're able to come and support you when you're doing some of your student activities on campus.

SM: Definitely. It's nice to get them out of the house, because I feel like they can be homebodies sometimes. So I'm like, mom, dad, I'm doing this really cool thing at the school, like, please come check it out. And so when they do come check it out, they're really happy they did. And so I'm also grateful to the college for giving me those opportunities that me and my whole family can enjoy.

KW: Great. And how old are your brothers? So my brother just turned eighteen. He's a senior at Righetti. He'll be coming here to Hancock, after he graduates. And my youngest brother is thirteen years old, so I still consider them like, they're my little brothers. They're

teeny tiny, but they're really getting up there, which, you know, my eighteen-year-old is taller than me, so, but I love him to death, and I'm kind of like the second mama bear at home.

KW: Nice. So, so where'd you go to elementary school in Orcutt? Which one?

SM: I went to Alice Shaw Elementary. Best years of my life. It's amazing. The teachers there were just so nurturing to us, and, I just, I look back at my time at elementary school so fondly because we were just in such a safe environment and it was before any of us had iPhones or iPads. We were kind of like that last generation that didn't immediately get thrown into the technological world. So we were still playing hopscotch and tag and, you know, talking about just day-to-day things like who has a crush on who and who's "it" in tag. That was the hot topic of the day in elementary school.

KW: Nice. So, so you went to Orcutt Academy, and, I think one of the interesting things there, is some of the activities that you did there that were leadership. What are you particularly proud of from your Orchid Academy days?

SM: Yeah. I look back at OA and we had such a blast, founding the first Latinos Unidos chapter there at Orcutt Academy. And so, Latinos Unidos was already at other high schools, including Righetti and PV Santa Maria. And, as a POC, I kind of felt, you know, it was hard to find my crowd and it was hard to fit in and stuff. So, we founded Latino Unidos, me, myself and the help of a lot of my friends that were just so supportive and, you know, whatever I wanted to make happen, they were just there right beside me helping me. And so we started that as, culturally inclusive environment, highlighting Latino culture And, we put on a lot of cool events, surrounding Dia de los Muertos and Cinco de Mayo. And so that was really cool to put on for the student body. We were a small campus, but stuff like that made it that more special.

KW: Nice. And then, while you were there, did you take some concurrent enrollment classes?

SM: Oh, yes. So Orcutt Academy is a college prep high school, And so that means we had the opportunity to take a vast amount of concurrent enrollment, which I'm so grateful for. It was an amazing opportunity to get those college credits while I was in high school and it also gave me, a bit of an insight as to what the academics at Hancock would be like. And, you know, being able to take those classes, rack up my credits, and also kind of get, a flash forward of what my time in college would be like. It just kind of solidified that I wanted to attend Hancock out of high school.

KW: Great. And I know I'm supposed to know this. Is this your second year at Hancock?

SM: This is actually my third year. I am a third year. Yeah. I stayed that extra year, which it was the right choice for me. And now I'm just ready to graduate. This will be my last semester, so I'll be transferring in the fall.

KW: Have you decided where yet?

SM: I applied to four UCs, so I'm just waiting to hear back. I did submit a TAG to UC Santa Barbara, which is the transfer admission guarantee. So as long as I pass my classes this semester, I'm guaranteed admission into UCSB, which is so exciting.

KW: That'll be cool. That would be very cool.

SM: Very cool.

KW: And then you're gonna major in political science down there.

SM: Yes. I applied to all schools under political science.

KW: Alright. So, now you're you're here, you've been active in student government, and now you're the student body president. What have you learned as student body president?

SM: I have learned a lot as student body president. This is my, I want to say, fourth semester in leadership because it is a class that students can enroll in, Leadership 111 and 112. So, I did my time in those two classes, and then after my, second semester in Leadership, I that's when I ran, for the presidency. And so, it's just opened so many doors for me, chances for me to grow my leadership in terms of working with a diverse group of individuals. We're the same in the sense that all students in leadership, we want to be involved. We want to know what Hancock is involved in, you know, we want to get our nose into everything. But we're also just very unique and different in a lot of different aspects as well.

KW: So during your time, you guys have, you know, had some input on things happening on campus. What do you think has been, might not be your favorite one, but, you know, a couple of things that you've enjoyed, being having your hands in and getting them, off and running here on campus?

SM: For sure. Well, we got to draft up and submit a resolution in support of the baccalaureate program here at Hancock. And, so that was really huge for us to be a part of. We understand the importance of bringing those opportunities to our local communities And so, being able to show that we support as a student government, this movement that the entire college is moving towards was really awesome. Also speaking at Hancock Honors, in support of the Hancock Promise, because, you know, that is just a huge reason why students come here and why they stay here, because you really don't get those opportunities to have affordable, let alone free college, like anywhere. So, and then also just speaking in terms of basic student advocacy, we go to leadership conference conferences each year.

So last year, we got to go to the San Francisco area and two years ago, I went to San Diego. This semester, we're going to be going to Washington and Santa Clara for different

leadership conferences, just speaking on general student advocacy and what's important to the student population. And so we'll get to set up a meeting with our representative Salud Carbajal, so that's going to be really exciting to, be in the mix of all that.

KW: That's going to be great. So and then, you might be coming with a couple of us to go to Washington DC again in April, right?

SM: Yes. Ideally, we'll be going to the HACU in April. Mhmm. So I'm really looking forward to that. Me and my fellow leadership student, our student trustee Oscar going, so it's gonna be super fun.

KW: Yeah. That'll be a good time. So let's go back to that, talking about the Hancock Honors because that was that was the first time we hosted this event. It was unlike anything I mean, not only at the college, in our whole community. Nobody's ever seen anything like that. It was a great event that our foundation put on, and you were kind of the keynote speaker. So, what kind of what did you take away from being able to do that?

SM: Well, first of all, I just wanna express my generosity for the opportunity of being able to be a part of that. The inaugural Hancock honors, it was such a blast. I think it came out just amazing and it brought, like you said, it brought the community together in a way that we don't really have a lot of opportunities to dress up and, be a part of a, you know, collegiate event and just express our gratitude for each other. And, and so, yeah, being a part of Hancock Honors as a keynote speaker nonetheless, I spoke on my experience at Orcutt Academy, being a first gen Latina, starting Latino Unidos, working up to here at Hancock, getting getting involved in student government, and, just speaking in support of student success. Because at the end of the day, that's why I'm a representative. You know, I want all of our students to be able to achieve the same kind of success that I have here at Hancock and, if I can advocate for that in any way, that's, I'm gung ho. But yeah, I think it was- it was such a great opportunity. I met so many amazing people. I got to meet, Paul Cook at CoastHills and, he's the one who offered me a marketing internship. So I just got to start that, two months ago and it's it's been such an amazing opportunity working with the marketing team there.

KW: Nice. Yeah. That's so your other passion, that, I remember the first time we met and you started talking about this right away is the Active Minds Club. Tell us about the Active Minds Club.

SM: Yeah. So, Active Minds started as the mental wellness club, which I founded last spring. And so, that was a club that I founded so students could get involved in mental health advocacy and education and, just kind of get involved in starting a free and comfortable conversation, surrounding taking care of your mental wellness. And this past fall, we actually got offered a grant to start our own Active Minds chapter. So Active Minds is a nationally recognized mental health advocacy organization, and they're specifically on college campuses. So they're on over five hundred college and university campuses nationwide. So when we got the opportunity to start a chapter here, we were like, yes, let's

do it. And, yeah, essentially, it's, you know, the same goals, just making sure that students are being presented opportunities to take care of their mental health and learn how to destigmatize the topic surrounding mental health and mental illness.

KW: Let's think about that for a little bit, about what's going on that is you know, there there's always been stress in college, you know, but it it feels a lot different today, especially coming out of the pandemic, because you were in high school during the pandemic. Right? When did you graduate?

SM: I was class of '21.

KW: So you kind of lost your senior year. Right?

SM: Yeah. Definitely.

KW: So a lot of students are still recovering from that. We don't think about it because it's it feels like it was a million years ago. And really it was just four years ago when when that whole thing started. And it, so, what are the kind of stresses that come from, you know, having missed, you know, at least a year, and for some students, two years of being in class with their peers?

SM: For sure. I see it a lot in my peers and, you know, even in myself, you know, a lot of hesitation to get back into the swing of things, you know, full force. We know that we're all back on campus in person but there's still a bit of hesitation in terms of, you know, getting involved on campus or making sure that we're showing up to classes on time and every time there is a class and just, you know, putting our best foot forward in terms of our academic achievement. And, but yeah, in terms of mental health, the pandemic had, a lot of repercussions, affecting students' mental health in particular because, you know, not only were we, going through isolation and the anxiety of like, "wow, there's a global pandemic happening and we don't know where it's headed towards", but also we had to keep in mind our futures in terms of college. And so just having those two things to juggle back and forth, it was a lot for, you know, our graduating class. And it was, you know, actually part of a big reason why I knew I had to come to Hancock because the stress of the pandemic and that was actually the same year that my dad got diagnosed with his cancer diagnosis. And so, at eighteen, I didn't even have my license yet. So the thought of, leaving home to go to college when I think I got wait-listed to, like, one school out of high school. It was so competitive. So it was just a no-brainer to come here to Hancock. And, I think the pandemic was actually an amazing opportunity as well because it opened the discussion to mental health in a way that we had never seen prior to that. People were just being more open with what they were going through. And so that's honestly the first step in mental health advocacy is, what are you going through and what are you learning from it?

What can we help you with so that you can continue striving towards wellness? That's the first step of it all. And so that was actually an opportunity that came out of the pandemic, ironically.

KW: Yeah. So, on a lighter note, so you didn't get your driver's license until you were eighteen?

SM: Yeah. I was a late bloomer.

KW: But that's- I don't think you are, actually. That that's, so, you know, my son who's a student here at Hancock is a year behind you at OA. He didn't get his license until the summer before he started here either. Is there something different in the way your generation is interacting with each other that makes you know, when I was a kid, if I wanted to see my friends, I had to drive.

SM: Right.

KW: And, you know, all those movies from the eighties where they're just hanging out at the mall, that that's kinda what we did. It was it was really kinda pathetic, to be honest with you.

SM But, I think the '80s are so cool.

KW: But, I mean, is there something that you see about, you know, your peers that maybe, you know, having that mobility is not as critical? Or what is it about that? Because because I'm telling you, those of us who are Gen X and the baby boomers, we can't figure this out.

SM: Sure. Well, it goes without saying, you know, we are already so intertwined in terms of, like, social media and the technology world is just it's advancing every day, in ways that we would have never even expected. You know, I'm sure you couldn't have expected it. I don't even know where we're headed towards. But it's opened doors for us to be connected without leaving our house, right? Without having to hop into a car and drive to our friend's house. And that comes with its pros and cons, of course, just like anything. But, I think that shows the importance of, community. You know, if there aren't ways for us to be able to stay connected, even if it is virtual, you know, but it has to be in a way that people feel passionate about, people feel like there's an area where they can belong to and that they are welcomed. And so, here at Hancock, I think we have like over 35 student clubs, and so they meet in person and virtually, and they offer lunch and activities. And so, that is a good opportunity for students to get connected and kind of get back into the mix of things, which I feel like has been a little bit prolonged since the pandemic.

KW: So, this kind of circles back to the idea of because I, you know, I see that with my son and, you know, at night on his headphones talking to his buddies. And, and he's not a big social media user, but that social media comes with kind of a dark side.

Right? I mean, that you kind of go back to your Active Minds Club. So what is your what is your club doing to help students understand how not to get stuck in one of those dark rabbit holes about social media?

SM: Yeah. So actually, before I started Active Minds, I had the opportunity to work with Transitions Mental Health and something that they did was they hosted a forum where they had a guest speaker. Her name was Bailey Patel. She's amazing. She's on TED Talk. I believe she did her master's at Harvard, specifically on safe social media. So through working with them, I was able to, get into her research. And it's actually way more simple than you could ever imagine. And so is taking your mental health back into your hands. It's way more simple than people think of. They think of like, "oh, I cannot take my mental health into my own hands, you know, I don't have any control over how I'm feeling". And that's simply not true. You know, your impact, and the- your actions have actually a lot to do with how your mental health is doing. And that's great because it puts the power back into yourself. And so, yeah, Bailey's Safe Social Media Forum, she was speaking about how there's simple ways that you can go about making sure that you're mindful while you're on social media because it can be pretty detrimental when, you know, you're online and they call it, you know, mindlessly scrolling for hours and, perhaps your feed is just full of things that aren't really helping you in any way, shape or form. And so, you know, you don't want to waste your time looking through things that are, not helping you. And even on top of that, maybe they're affecting your mental health negatively in terms of, seeing people that maybe you have a habit of comparing yourself to and feeling like, "oh, they're doing way better than I am", when we all know everyone puts their best face on social media, so it's not the full picture, so you shouldn't compare yourself to anyone on social media. And also, there's a lot of just things that, are false, you know, in terms of false news and it can be scary when you don't know how reliable your sources are on social media. And so, with safe social media, something to keep in mind is to clean out your feed. Just because you follow someone right now or just because your feed is looking a certain way right now, doesn't mean it always has to be like that. You can go into your social media, clean out your accounts, unfollow. You can even, you know, take a break from social media. There's, there's a number of different ways that you can just, mindfully, see how social media is affecting you and making sure that it's in a healthy way.

KW: Good. That's good. Chris is back there. He's like, I didn't write those questions down.

SM: Yeah. We're kind of going all script, but I'm having fun.

KW: So, so so you're gonna go let's go back to talk about UCSB or some other unnamed UCs. And if you so you get your political science degree, then what?

SM: Right. That is the question. Not only on my mind, but all the other college graduates, but, I love my major. It has, it's so interesting learning about, how society forms in different ways and how they, you know, elect, their leaders and the systems that keep it all going. And, I think moving forward, not only am I interested, you know, on the political side of it, you know, getting more into, policy and legislative structures and stuff because at the end of the day, that political participation is what is going to make a big difference. But I've really fallen in love with advocacy, you know? Not only in mental health, but being able to be a student advocate and, you know, seeing different communities, marginalized populations

that, need a voice to step up and kind of see, okay, what are we going to do about this? Like, it's easy to acknowledge things and, you know, post a retweet, like, how are we going to help this population? It's like, no, what are you actually going to do to help them? And so, just being like action-oriented in terms of advocacy, which I think would pair really nicely with my political science degree, getting involved with, you know, how the, policy of it all, you know, suicide prevention policies, Mental health politics is something that is up and coming, but I think there's much more to be done in terms of advocating for it in the right direction. So, I would be really interested in getting into something like that. And, my experience that I've had with marketing and social media has been such a helpful tool in, you know, spreading the word of whatever you're advocating for, getting the word out there, and being able to make sure that you're doing it in a way that you'll reach as many people as possible has been really cool.

KW: Nice. What else? You wrote down a bunch of notes. What else did you wanna talk about while you were here?

SM: I mean, I feel like a big part of why Hancock has become my home is ASBG. ASBG, our Associated Student Body Government. I spend a lot of time there. It's a- it's a three-hour class twice a week. And aside from that, you know, I get to do a lot of as ASBG president. I get to spend a lot of time with you and the rest of the admin in College Council, board of trustees meetings, citizens oversight, the Hancock Board Foundation. Those are all, committees that I sit as a student rep on. So, just the opportunity to be in those, spaces is, really cool. It's done a lot, for my educational career so far. Getting to build relationships with you guys and come to you for advice if I ever need it. It just it makes such a difference, truly.

KW: I always worry about students being in those committee and council meetings because they can get kind of boring. I'm like I'm like, I love this. I'm I'm a I'm a student government and politics nerd. That's my jam right there. I'm like, I could sit in there for hours.

KW: Yeah. See, I hate meetings.

SM: I can see get to see you get restless sometimes. I'm just kidding.

KW: So, all right, one more more topic, and we kind of touched on a little bit with the Hancock Promise, but you're one of the early you weren't in the first class of Promise students, but you were a Promise student who saw your first year free at AHC, as the tagline goes.

How transformative was that for you and your family?

SM: It's just been incredible. I mean, it's funny, I have to think back as when, my time when I was a senior in high school, right? And I vividly remember this, instance where one of our teachers was asking all of us, like, Where do you guys want to go to college? You know, Where do you aspire to, go after high school? And so, you know, everyone's spouting out

like their dream school, you know, like Cal Poly or UCLA. And I remember I was like, "Hancock. I want to go to Hancock". And everyone kind of looked at me like, "did you say Hancock?" And I kinda looked at them back like, yeah, like preschool. Like, I think, that was just one of the many instances as a first-gen Latina, you know, at a primarily white, college prep school where I was kind of just, like, dumbstruck. I was like, Hancock is, a top state institution and they are wanting us to go there for free through the Hancock Promise. And, it was just something that that's what made Hancock a no-brainer for me. I saw that opportunity and, my parents, you know, they're working class. They've worked hard their whole life and they really have instilled the mindset in me that, you know, you want to do everything that you can so that you're getting ahead. You don't want to do things that are going to set you a foot behind everyone else, you know? And so, a big thing of that is trying my best to not incur so much student debt. And so, coming to Hancock, I knew that I was putting my best foot forward. I was actually going to be one step ahead, not incurring any student debt and I still haven't, three years later. So, but you know what I have racked up? I've racked up a lot of college credit. I have been able to build up my GPA, so I'm able to apply to UCs, which let that's a dream come true in itself, even being able to apply. And, and so, yeah, the Hancock Promise has just made my academic journey not a stressful one. It's actually made it a joyous and fruitful one, and for that, I am forever grateful.

KW: That's awesome. And, you know, one of the great things about Orcutt Academy is when you go in the in the multipurpose room there and the students have put up where they intend to go, two out of three are saying they're coming to Hancock. I love that Orcutt Academy has kind of figured out the genius of, "I can go there, it's affordable, the faculty are fantastic".

SM: Yes.

KW: And when you're getting great faculty-

SM: Incredible.

KW: And to, you know, to have that opportunity and exactly as you say, it's, you know, when, you know, people my age and older, college was really cheap. It was really cheap and I could work twenty hours a week and have an apartment and go to college. And those days are gone. Right? That's not going to happen, anywhere. And that's not just a California thing, that's across the country. It just doesn't work that way.

So, we're fortunate that the Hancock Promise brings us more students than ever, but especially we get students like you who come in and make huge deals, huge impacts on changing the odds for your fellow students.

SM: Thank you.

KW: So we're grateful to have you as ASBG president.

SM: Thanks so much.

KW: And we're really happy that you joined us for the Hancock Conversations podcast.

SM: I had such a blast. Thank you so much.

KW: Great. Alright. Well, you've been listening to Hancock Conversations, the podcast about all things Allan Hancock College. I'm Kevin Walthers, superintendent/president here at the college. We'll see you next time.

SM: Bye.

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