

BELONGING IN *ceat*

with Isela Ortiz



Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Programs



Isela Ortiz is a junior majoring in Mechanical and Aerospace engineering in the College of Engineering, Architecture and Technology (CEAT) at Oklahoma State University (OSU). She chose to major in engineering because of a Project Lead the Way course she took in high school. Her teacher taught them about the design process and introduced her to what engineers were and how every design around us needed the help of an engineer to be created. The more

engineering based problem sets she got to work through, the more she knew she wanted to become an engineer. Both of Isela's parents grew up in Mexico where very little schooling was available to them. Because they never had the opportunity to pursue their own education growing up, they have always supported Isela and her siblings educational goals and pursuits. Their encouragement in school has always brought her lots of happiness.

Their trust in her allowed Isela to choose her own course of study and pursue what she found to be most interesting in a future career.

Isela originally chose CEAT, because it was the most cost efficient for her. She did have access to large funds to come to school, but she says that CEAT does an excellent job retaining students via scholarships. The other reason she chose CEAT was because she wanted to obtain a



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degree from a well respected school that would allow her to grow into the best version of herself. Now that she is here, she says she is extremely happy with her decision because CEAT feels like its own community. Sometimes, she forgets how big OSU actually is because she feels like most people know each other and that it's easy to find a familiar and friendly face around campus.

Isela has loved being a CEAT student. Her academic experience has been along the lines of what she had expected, due to her high school preparation and the classes they offered to her, such as AP Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Math.

The most surprising thing Isela says about CEAT is the amount of tutoring available. She didn't think that she would ever need tutoring services, but CEAT makes it so easy and normal. Her homework gets done faster by seeking help early on and knowing where to find tutoring when she needs help on a certain topic. She also likes how readily

available most TA's are and how willing they are to help with understanding class topics.

Isela says that she has received support from both her peers and OSU faculty. She said that being a Freshman Representative for the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers (SHPE) her first year at OSU helped her get connected with upperclassman that knew the ropes around OSU and engineering. She got insight from the classroom knowledge to knowing where to eat off-campus. Through SPHE, she learned how to be a professional and that college is about making a lasting contribution to the people around you. Her favorite SHPE events is "Noche de Ciencias," which is "Night of the Sciences," where they bring STEM activities as well as bilingual financial aid information to K-12 schools.

The other support system Isela is thankful for is the Division of Institutional Diversity. The biggest impact the Division of Institutional

Diversity left on her was when she was a part of the Retention Initiative for Student Excellence (RISE) program her freshman year. Being a first generation college student, no one in her family completely understood how she was feeling and were just as lost about how to navigate college. By being in RISE, Isela met a support system that taught her about time management, how to email her professors, and was connected with some of her best friends. RISE held her accountable for my own studies during her first year at OSU.

The biggest challenge Isela has faced being a CEAT student is self-confidence. She says that it is easy to get discouraged whenever you don't get the results you were hoping for on an exam or a quiz. The way she overcomes this is by reminding herself that she is here to learn and that she is actively learning from her mistakes and trying her best.

The faculty and staff that has most impacted her academic career would



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be Ms. Maura and Chris Bingham from the Division of Institutional Diversity. Isela met Ms. Maura through the RISE program and Chris Bingham through the Inclusion Leadership Program. They really cared about her as a person and always asked if she needed anything. Their offices in the Division of Institutional Diversity really helped Isela feel at home on campus. She says they are good at reminding her why she should believe in herself. Isela says they also give the best pep talks.

When Isela was a freshman, she didn't know what clubs to be a part of, so she went to a large variety of club meetings. She believes this allowed her to meet a lot of her CEAT peers and become more encouraged to test out the different opportunities available on campus. She held an executive team position for SHPE freshman and sophomore year, and has been a counselor for the Summer Bridge program, worked at the Design and Manufacturing Lab (DML) and is now a CEAT

Ambassador as well as a CEAT Peer Mentor. Isela says that working at DML is exciting because they do basic trainings on the mill and lathe machines, which a lot of people aren't familiar with. She also likes getting to help students learn how the machines run and seeing them utilize their new skills with research, or even their senior design projects. She also likes to help freshman navigate their first year the same way a lot of upperclassmen helped her do the same. She chose to support her peers in that way because she believes it's important to lend a helping hand when you've done something in the past and then see someone else who needs help doing the same.

If Isela could give her freshman self advice, she would say that if you want to pursue a degree in engineering, architecture, or engineering technology, you don't have to be a genius to do it. She believes you have to be passionate, patient, and willing to put in the work to learn about your desired topic.

It can be tough to grasp certain concepts but don't give up and you'll feel so accomplished when you figure it out! She would also tell her freshman self to remember to not only do good in school but focus on connecting yourself with the people around you. Life isn't very fun if you're not spending it with others that share common interests and goals. She is also still learning this one, but time management is very important!

For Isela, Inclusion is making people feel valued. She says that you can "include" anyone in anything, but if you don't make them feel valued or listen to their voice, it makes them feel bad. Isela believes when good teamwork is being presented, things are being done efficiently, effectively, and happily. Most team members will want to do their best work when their work is being put to use and seen as a positive contribution to the team.

Isela belongs in CEAT because CEAT helps me grow into a better engineer and person.

