



# STEM Student Profile



## Guillermo Mendoza Contreras

*Mechanical Engineering Major  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)*

### Future Plans:

- Explore graduate research in AI or Computational Neuroscience

### Advice for Students:

- Take advantage of resources offered by MESA and STEM clubs
- Learn about the transfer process right away



Growing up, Guillermo Mendoza Contreras never thought about going to college. His parents, who are immigrants from Mexico and Nicaragua, hadn't gone. But Guillermo was a good student and by his junior year at Carlmont High School in Belmont, his goal was to attend a great university. His first step was at College of San Mateo (CSM) and after just a year there he transferred to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

From early in elementary school, Guillermo loved his math classes and was a good student. He is majoring in mechanical engineering, saying, "I think engineering was a good way of combining computer science, math, and physics. But also it has a design aspect ... It's more tangible." Starting his college journey

at CSM was not Guillermo's original plan but financially it made sense. He took classes, got involved in the MESA program, joined the Drone Club and student government.

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Through MESA, Guillermo joined a Stanford Small Science Group and worked as a research intern. In fact, it was his Stanford mentor who encouraged him to apply to MIT.

Guillermo recommends that CSM students take advantage small class sizes, getting support through

office hours and studying with peers to have a solid knowledge of the material. "Transferring into a school, you want to have your fundamentals sound in case you are taking advanced classes that build upon those concepts," he says. He advises talking with a STEM transfer counselor ASAP to know which classes transfer with credit.

For Guillermo's, the best thing about attending CSM was the support. "Take advantage of the resources —the full list—," he says, "so you will be ready to take advantage of opportunities at a bigger school."

Through the MESA program he made connections with STEM majors and found opportunities. "In MESA, you get aligned with people of your background who all share STEM interests. It's like a tight

knit community. And Olivia [Viveros, MESA Director] pushed me to do a lot of applications, or just offered general help," he says. Olivia also hired Guillermo to tutor other students.

In the CSM Drone Mapping Club he developed skills that helped him get hired as an undergraduate researcher in MIT's Astrodynamics, Space Robotics and Controls Lab. The project is to develop a sensor system to detect objects in space and formulate the best path to avoid them.

Guillermo has enjoyed his first year at MIT: "I'm very excited for my journey and want to keep growing and to never stop being curious and passionate," he says. His journey continues with a summer internship in 2024 at the NASA's Jet Propulsion Lab in Southern California.