



February 19, 2025

Illinois Community College Trustees Association
401 E. Capitol, Suite 200
Springfield, IL 62701-1711

Re: 2025 ICCTA Pacesetter Award

Dear ICCTA Awards Committee,

The Illinois Valley Community College Board of Trustees is pleased to recommend Edgar Lucero Castillo of Peru, Illinois for the ICCTA Pacesetter Award.

Mr. Castillo, a 2018 graduate of IVCC, serves as an attorney at a local law firm. As a young professional, he gives back to his community through youth soccer coaching, serving on the IVCC Foundation Board of Directors, and is a prospective member for Rotary. Castillo also served as a panelist for the IVCC Hispanic Heritage Month panel to share his experiences with current students.

Upon graduating from IVCC, Castillo attended Northern Illinois University, where he graduated summa cum laude. Upon graduating Northern Illinois University with a bachelor's degree in accounting, he joined PricewaterhouseCoopers, a Big 4 accounting firm in Chicago. Throughout his undergraduate studies, Castillo worked as a legal clerk and assisted in translating for Spanish-speaking clients.

In 2022, Castillo received the Edward T. Lee Scholarship and began legal studies at the University of Illinois Chicago School of Law. During law school, he served as a student attorney in the Community Enterprise and Solidarity Clinic, providing pro bono legal services to local small businesses.

The IVCC Board of Trustees wholeheartedly recommends Edgar Lucero Castillo for the 2025 ICCTA Pacesetter Award, which recognizes the many success stories of Illinois' more recent community college students.

Sincerely,

Everett Solon

Board Chair, Illinois Valley Community College

Illinois Valley Community College is proud to nominate Edgar Lucero Castillo of Peru for the 2025 Pacesetter Award. Mr. Castillo was honored as one of IVCC's most promising students when he graduated in 2018 as he received the Bill and Dian Taylor Scholarship from the IVCC Foundation. He continued on to Northern Illinois University and earned a Bachelor's degree in Accounting. After that, Mr. Castillo earned a Juris Doctor from the University of Illinois Chicago College of Law.

Criteria 1: Overcoming life's obstacles

Reflecting on his experiences, Mr. Castillo realized that community college was a key tenet of the American dream of his parents sought and one that was often unavailable to others in his family. Upon meeting his grandfather for the first time in 2024, he learned that his grandfather was only able to attend school for two years, but he advanced quickly and reached fifth grade. This experience reflects a harsh reality—that many people have the ability to excel in school but are held back by socio-economic circumstances. Mr. Castillo noted in his personal statement, “Had I grown up in Mexico, I might have faced the same fate as my grandfather—unable to attend school despite my potential.” This barrier is one that is a reality for so many students. In this case, Mr. Castillo was able to work part-time to make his way through IVCC, where he connected with faculty and participated in mentoring programs which has a great impact. It was the life-changing scholarship offered by one of our most generous alumni families, Bill and Dian Taylor, that made it possible for him to earn his bachelor's degree. Even though he graduated summa cum laude, Mr. Castillo shares his struggles with facing impostor syndrome while in law school and corporate America and how he recognized the importance of being a representative for others who feel the same.

Criteria 2: Demonstrated Promise and Distinction in Chosen Career/Field of Study

During his time in college, Mr. Castillo's promise and distinction was recognized with the Bill and Dian Taylor scholarship to Northern Illinois University and then the Edward T. Lee scholarship to the UIC School of Law. In addition to his potential in the classroom, Mr. Castillo was an Octofinalist and Top 5 Petitioner Oralist in the Dean Fred F. Herzog Moot Court Competition and a Quarterfinalist in the 2024 Hispanic National Bar Association Moot Court Competition. In the field of accounting, Mr. Castillo showed promise as a Senior Associate at PricewaterhouseCoopers where he researched tax laws, regulations, and rulings to implement changes in tax compliance, participated in the implementation of automation systems including the streamlining of real estate engagement workpapers, and was a lead point of contact for India and Argentina off-shore teams and coordinated

scheduling—all within just two short years. Upon graduating from law school, Mr. Castillo remained with the firm that gave him a start as a law clerk.

Criteria 3: Humanitarian service that has proven greatly beneficial to society

Mr. Castillo started with the firm of Perona, Peterlin, and Associates in high school and throughout his undergraduate studies, Mr. Castillo continued working with them with increasing responsibilities, including as a legal clerk and translating for Spanish-speaking clients. During his time in law school, he held a 711 License Student Attorney for pro bono work with the Community Enterprise and Solidarity Clinic. Throughout his working career, he has made it a priority to use his Spanish biliteracy to communicate legal rights to Spanish-speaking clients. In our community, there are few bilingual attorneys so this support is critical.

Criteria 4: Continued interest in and support of education and community colleges

Mr. Castillo shares in his personal statement that, “Living in a rural community, I have witnessed “brain drain” as many talented individuals leave our community—often necessary to pay off student debt.” We are so fortunate that he has chosen to return to the community. Not only is he active in the community, he has stepped up as one of our newest members of the IVCC Foundation Board of Directors. In addition, Mr. Castillo participated in the Hispanic Heritage Month panel of IVCC Alumni where he shared insights and advice with our TRiO students and others. He is a tremendous advocate for IVCC and a fantastic role model for our current students. He shares in his personal statement that, “Community college offers a solution. When students graduate with little to no debt, they have the freedom to stay and invest in their communities.” He has done just that and our College and community as a whole has benefitted from his commitment.

Criteria 5: Completion of a recognized program of instruction or attendance for at least 30 semesters hours at an ICCTA member college after June 30, 2013

Mr. Castillo graduated Summa Cum Laude with an Associate in Science degree in 2018.

Summary

Edgar Lucero Castillo is a promising young professional in both the field of law and as a representative for first generation and Latino college students in our community. He has a passion for serving and giving back to the community and has shown that hard work and dedication pays

off. We thank you for considering him for this tremendous honor, as we are so proud of all that he has accomplished so far and know there is so much more yet to come.