SPRINTER NAMED 2011-12 STUDENT ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

For the first time ever, Santa Monica College named a 2011-12 Student Athlete of the Year – sprinter Michael Tobin, Jr. – in a surprise announcement today (May 24).

Tobin was named one of 15 outstanding SMC students as 2011-12 Student Athletes of the Year in their individual sports, but never before had the college picked an overall winner. All the student athletes were selected for demonstrating scholastic achievement as much as athletic talent and persistence.

The awards to the diverse group of students were presented at the annual awards breakfast sponsored by the SMC General Advisory Board, a community support group.

Tobin, who was named for track and field and is coached by Larry Silva, graduated from high school with honors in the San Francisco Bay area. He also received the President’s Educational Award for academic excellence as well as the Outstanding Alameda County Scholar Athlete Award. He was raised by his single mother who instilled in him dedication to hard work, focus on education and resistance to negative pressures in his environment. He attributes whatever success he has had to, in his words, “the outstanding parenting of my mother and best friend.”
Track and field has been his focus at SMC, aside from academic endeavors and participation in Black Collegians. He was a State meet qualifier, recognized in the top 20 athletes in both 100 and 200 meters for California Community Colleges, and was No. 2 in both events in the Western States Conference.

With a 3.76 grade point average (just shy of a perfect 4.0), Tobin wants to be the first in his family to graduate from a university. He hopes to transfer to Stanford, UCLA or UC Berkeley and continue to compete in track while studying biomechanics. He hopes to attend medical school to pursue studies in neuroscience and orthopedics, eventually to be a university or professional team doctor.

The other student athletes (and their coaches) are:

**Nick Alvarez – Men’s Cross Country (Coach: Eric Barron)**

Born in Santa Monica but coming to SMC from Culver City High School, Nick was the oldest of four siblings and pursued running throughout high school, where one of his sisters was his teammate.

At SMC Nick has been the fastest runner during both of his cross country seasons. He has been a two-time “most valuable athlete” and also a two-time qualifier for Southern California Regional cross country championship. He also received the 2012 WSC Honorable Mention - All Conference. Nick is currently aiming for his next level of endurance in October when he plans to run in the Long Beach Marathon.

Nick’s achievement in his sport is the more impressive given that he has worked a full 40 hours per week this past fall as a supervisor for a 12-screen theater complex in Culver City while he continued to pursue a major in Kinesiology.

**Michael Carden – Men’s Swimming (Coach: Steve Contarsy)**

There are two passions in Michael’s life: swimming and music. He began swimming at the age of seven and continued through high school. But when he also developed an interest in the guitar and started a band called “The Academy Is...” with friends, his focus on swimming took a backseat. The band was signed by Atlantic Records and
released three albums and Michael had the opportunity of a lifetime to tour the world and play for thousands of people.

In the fall of 2011 the band agreed to go on indefinite hiatus, and Michael’s passion for swimming reignited. With the help of his coach and an unwavering focus he has been training harder than ever and credits the team experience and a great training atmosphere at SMC. At the conference meet he swam his lifetime best times in the 100 and 200 freestyle and looks forward to an exciting state meet and is looking forward to continuing his swimming career at SMC and beyond. With a perfect 4.0 GPA Michael has found a balance between athletic and academic performance.

Alexandru Ceachir – Football (Coach: Gifford Lindheim)

Hailing from Moldova, Alex had no exposure to American football when he arrived at SMC and joined in spring off-season conditioning program. Unlike American-born fellow students, he truly started from the beginning. But through relentless hard work he came an incredibly long way and against all odds started in his freshman year, playing in every game. His teammates voted him “most improved player”.

Alexandru has worked as hard in the classroom as on the field and was nominated for Dean’s List. He received multiple football scholarship offers to Colorado, Utah, University of Hawaii Cal and Arkansas. But he has chosen to accept a scholarship offer and play for UCLA. His coaches laud Alexandru for being an outstanding person as well as an athlete and predict a bright future for him.

Jocelyne Ferrufino – Women’s Softball (Coach: Char Wilson)

Following in her aunt’s footsteps, Jocelyne chose SMC after graduating from Faith Baptist High School in Canoga Park. Once arrived on campus she joined Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society and signed on for the softball program. She has excelled on the field and also earned a place on the Dean’s Honor List, maintaining a 3.3 grade point average. Jocelyne is an important role model for her younger siblings and in spite of her full schedule maintains her commitment to help with her church’s youth Sunday school.

Having played a significant leadership role in the Corsair softball program, Jocelyne was named team captain in 2010, received the Defensive Player of the Year in 2011, and was selected to the Golden West College All-Tournament Team in 2012, along with being co-captain of the team for 2012. Because of the hard work Jocelyne has put in on the softball field and in the classroom, she will have the opportunity to choose among the many scholarship offers she has received.

Sam Li – Women’s Soccer (Coach: Aaron Benditson)
Sam came to SMC from Saratoga High School in Northern California and is completing two productive years both academically and athletically. She received a Dean’s List nomination while being named the Women’s Soccer Team Captain in 2012, and she was a 1st Team All Western States Conference selection as well as the team’s Inspirational Leadership recipient.

Sam’s excellent on-field performance resulted in an invitation to participate in the prestigious Sophomore Showcase where sophomore athletes statewide get exposure to four-year institutions. Sam’s academic goal is to major in Communications, and she plans to attend UC Santa Cruz and to continue her playing career there on the women’s soccer team.

**Jamillet Maldonado – Women’s Cross Country (Coach: Eric Barron)**

A true native of Los Angeles, Jamillet has been running since high school, encouraged by her parents. Arriving at SMC she dedicated herself to being the very best runner she could be and became a team leader in her second year, frequently the first to cross the finish line for her team. Jamillet received the female Athlete Scholar Award both in 2010 and 2011, demonstrating high academic achievement as well as athletic prowess. Her major is Nutrition and she will transfer to a four-year school in 2013.

Jamillet is also a two-time qualifier for Southern California Regional Cross Country Championships, the 2012 Western States Conference Women’s Cross Country Honorable Mention recipient, the 2011 Women’s Cross Country Most Valuable Athlete, and the 2012 Co-most Valuable Athlete. She looks forward to running for the four-year school she will attend after SMC.

**Esvan Middleton – Men’s Basketball (Coach: Jerome Jenkins)**

Arriving at SMC three years ago, Esvan was red-shirted and concentrated on his academics, but the next year he played a role in the 2010-11 Conference Championships, and was a starter for the 2011-12 team which he helped lead back to a winning season.

Esvan continued to work on his academics and has received a scholarship to Concordia University in Portland, Oregon where he aspires to major in Business. His coach gives him high praise as a good person and predicts that Esvan will be successful in his life beyond school.

**Alex Myers – Men’s Waterpolo (Coach: Brian Eskridge)**

Santa Monica-born, Alex graduated from Culver City High School, where he began his career in aquatics in his freshman year, changing gears from playing baseball through
middle school. He took to swimming and water polo readily, and to improve his skills he joined the LA Water Polo Club and then the Team Santa Monica swim club. He also found the time to become an Eagle Scout and to collect school supplies door to door for charity.

Alex completed two seasons of water polo and swimming at SMC and was the team captain in his second year. Both seasons he received the Most Valuable Player award as well as being named First Team All Western States Conference twice.

In the fall of this year Alex will be transferring to CSU Monterey Bay where he plans to major in Human Communications and then pursue a career in advertising.

Catie Roberts – Women’s Volleyball (Coach: Nicole Ryan)

Coming to SMC from Notre Dame Academy with a sturdy support system of family and friends, Catie enjoys playing competitive volleyball whether on the sand or indoor. She was the Scholar Athlete in her sport in the fall of 2011 maintaining a 3.5 GPA, the captain of the volleyball team in 2011, and on 1st Team All Conference Western States Conference. She ranked second in the state in kill leaders for most of the season and finished just 8 kills shy of the player who ranked first.

Catie will be missed for her energy, humor and work ethic and for the team camaraderie that she inspires. The University of Oregon in Eugene is the fortunate institution to benefit from her skills and attitude next year.

Criss Rodriguez – Women’s Tennis (Coach: Richard Goldenson)

Born in Havana, Cuba to tennis-playing parents, Criss was the youngest person ever in 2004 to be selected to the Cuban National Team, and at the age of 12 she earned a spot to compete in the Federation Cup. When her family won a visa lottery she moved to the USA and had to embrace a whole new culture and learn a new language. Criss began to attend classes at SMC in 2010 and landed a spot on the tennis team.

Criss went on to win the California State doubles championship in 2011 with her partner and was named to the Intercollegiate Tennis Association’s All-American Team for both singles and doubles. She is the captain of SMC’s 2012 team playing No.1 singles and No.1 doubles. This year Criss made it to the semi-finals in singles and the finals in doubles of the Southern California Regional Championships. She also made it to the quarter-finals in singles and semi-finals of doubles of the California State Championships, and has again earned All-American status in both singles and doubles.

Working 40 hours a week, attending classes and giving her all on the tennis court, Criss is managing her life with energy and enthusiasm.
Patty Salgado – Women’s Waterpolo (Coach: Steve Contarsy)

An SMC freshman this year, Patty graduated from Beverly Hills High School where she played water polo for four years, three of which were on the varsity team. She was nominated for the Beverly Hills Hall of Fame in her senior year, voted most outstanding player in the Ocean League and broke the single scoring record with 126 for a single season.

At SMC Patty continued her stellar trajectory. She scored 94 goals and was ranked fourth place in the state for the number of steals with 128. She was also awarded the Most Valuable Player of the season and says she can’t wait to return to play next year. Patty hopes to transfer to the University of Hawaii and continue to pursue her athletic and academic career there.

Elia Sanchez – Women’s Track & Field (Coach: Larry Silva)

With her parents and her brother Elia moved to East Los Angeles from Jalisco, Mexico in pursuit of a better life and opportunities. With the strong role model of her stay-at-home mom who went back to school and received her GED, and her dad who, even though he worked two jobs as long as she can remember took college classes to learn new programs for his machine business, Elia knew she had to excel. She did not have a good high school experience but graduated and vowed to do better going forward. At SMC Elia has a 3.3 GPA and is a serious photography major. As she says, “When I hold my Nikon D3 100 camera I know this is what I want to do”.

But Elia’s true passion is playing sports. Though she was an All-League Soccer player in high school she now excels in track and field at SMC as a freshman. She says that sprinting on the track is one of the greatest feelings ever and is “the sport I fell for and will never stop until my legs break off.” With that kind of determination, joy and steady eye on her future, Elia feels she can achieve her ambition of transferring to a UC campus, receiving a scholarship and continuing to compete in track and field.

Ekaterina Shatalova – Women’s Swimming (Coach: Steve Contarsy)

In Chelyabinsk, Russia, where she was born and spent her first 17 years, Katya developed an interest in the swim team and began swimming competitively at the age of 9, and by 13 was competing nationally, where her events were the 400 free, the 800 free and the 1500 freestyle. After finishing high school she moved with her mother to the USA and immediately began her studies at Santa Monica College, joining the swim program immediately. Her swimming helped her with the very big adjustment of the move to a new country and a new culture. She met other international students who were also swimming and they shared stories and adjustments.
In her first year at SMC Katya was able to participate in three relay events at the State Championships, which inspired her to work even harder. She met her goal this year of making the qualifying cuts in the mile, the 500m and the 200m as well as in three relay events.

Katya has a 3.73 GPA and hopes to transfer to UCLA where she would like to study for a degree in biochemistry. She plans to enter a physician’s assistant program. Katya is looking ahead but says she will always fondly remember her time at SMC.

**Gabe Ylo – Men’s Volleyball (Coach: John Mayer)**

Gabe was born and raised in the Philippines and moved to the United States in 2005 with his parents and two siblings. He received his early education at all-boys private schools before attending University High School where he was a scholar-athlete and a Silver Seal Bearer. He made time to head up an AIDS Walk committee and received a commendation for excellence in Peer Mediation and was named Best Spokesperson for Peer Mediation. His closeness with a large extended family continues to give him great strength and support in all that he does.

Athletically Gabe’s accomplishments are many: He was recognized for outstanding athletic achievement as a Scholar Athlete, received the 2006 Most Improved Player and the 2007-08 Coaches Award, was MVP in 2009 and also an LAVCA All-Star Game participant.

Gabe is completing his AA degree at SMC and has been admitted to Cal State University, Northridge as a psychology major, with eventual plans for law school. He has received offers to play volleyball for several colleges and is still considering these options for next fall. Whatever he decides to do, Gabe’s commitment to family, volleyball and service will continue unabated.