Valedictorian: “If There is no struggle, there is no progress”
Name: Roy P. Fontenot, II
DOB: August 25, 1981 | GPA: 3.901
Age: 31

Roy P. Fontenot, II is Southwest’s 2013 valedictorian with a cumulative GPA of 3.901.

He is a survivor and a remarkable achiever.

Roy’s life can best be summarized by the words of Frederick Douglass: “If there is no struggle, there is no progress.” Despite extraordinary hardship and tremendous personal loss, he continues to persevere and is unwavering in his pursuit of academic success.

Roy lost his father to cancer at the age of 12, his two-year-old daughter to a fatal asthma attack in 2007, and his mother to suicide in 2012.

With poor grades and no plans to attend college for financial reasons, Roy enlisted in the U.S. Navy in Norfolk, Virginia and briefly served post 9/11. However, he withdrew from the Navy in December 2001 as a result of racial discrimination and hatred within the service.

Life has not been easy for Roy.

To cope with his losses, he started down a self-destructive path and engaged in criminal activity. However, despite his losses and despair, he turned his life around through education and beat the odds.

On September 1, 2008, Roy became the proud father of twin boys, Roy and Ryan. He credits the birth of his sons for saving his life and giving him a new direction and determination.

As Roy began to shift his life to focus on becoming a role model for his sons, he faced yet another setback. In July 2009, his home was raided by law enforcement and he was taken to prison in front of his children on 33 charges of illegal usage of identification, fraud and grand theft. Roy was sentenced to serve three years at North Kern State prison. He was released in early 2011. Roy immediately enrolled at Southwest College in the summer of 2011 with the intent to succeed academically and deliver a message of hope to others.

Roy found his home at Southwest where he excelled academically.

“Southwest has shown me a different side of myself. I knew I was smart, but I was lazy. As a student, Southwest has invigorated a desire within me to excel not only at this level, but at any level and to share that energy and vigor with those around me – my peers, my friends, my family,” said Roy.

(cont.)
This year, he was voted as Executive Vice President to the Associated Students Organization on campus. He is also a student ambassador for the Passage Program, Phi Theta Kappa (academic honor society), S.T.E.M/TRIO Program and E.O.P.S. Roy is also on the Dean’s and President’s list for academic excellence. He will be receiving an Associate of Arts degree in Liberal Studies.

On his proudest moment in life, Roy says: “The proudest moment in my life has been the births of my children – Aaliyah, Roy and Ryan Fontenot.”

He also considers his biggest accomplishment to date is “my personal growth as a man.” “I realize that my experience is a driving factor in my overall success, and my ability to share my life experience with those around me is now being used by many,” said Roy. “My resilience – when people hear my story they see that I am able to continue on with a smile on my face. I think that’s a good thing.”

When Roy transfers, he will pursue a career in petroleum engineering.

“I’ve always liked working with my hands. As a child, I always took my toys apart and put them back together, mixed them up with other toys and made new toys. As I got older, my curiosity led me to desiring to want to be an engineer or to do something that allowed me to work with my brain and my hands at the simultaneously.”

He wants to pursue a Bachelor of Science, Master of Science and a doctorate degree from the University of Southern California.