A FAMILY FIRST
GRADS FORGE NEW GROUND
First in families to earn degrees

By Alexis Blue

When Carlos Martinez moved to Tucson from Mexico at the age of 9, he didn’t speak any English.

Next week, the 21-year-old will graduate from the UA with a degree in computer engineering. Alongside him at the ceremony will be his older brother Salvador, 23, who will receive a degree in electrical engineering.

The two will be the first in their family to graduate from college.

“It’s been a long journey,” Carlos Martinez said. “It feels awesome.”

The Martinez brothers are two of just over 100 December graduates who will attend tomorrow’s fourth annual Celebration of Achievement, a pre-commencement ceremony hosted by the UA’s Office of University Relations.

A little over 1,000 students representing ethnic minorities, first-generation graduates, income-eligible students and students with disabilities were invited to participate in the event, said Monica Vega, program coordinator for multicultural programs and services.

The students who chose to participate in the ceremony will have the chance to be recognized individually before their peers and family members.

“It’s really for the students,” Vega said. “It’s an intimate event that allows them to be individually recognized.”

For Carlos Martinez, the day is about more than personal recognition; it’s an opportunity to say thank you to his family.

He said there were times when his family “barely made it” financially, but they never gave up.

Carlos Martinez said neither of his parents finished high school, and it was always important to them to see their sons go to college.

“They were always pushing us, saying, ‘You have the opportunity to do something with your life’,” he said.

Carlos Martinez, who had never even owned a computer when he entered college 4 1/2 years ago, said he now hopes to go to work for a software company to help support his family.

He said his goal is to enable his father, who has worked in construction for years, to retire.

“We want to give back to our family,” he said.

La Aldea residents unhappy

By Alexis Blue

A group of 65 residents of the La Aldea graduate student housing complex have come together because of their dissatisfaction with the apartments.

Members of the association, which formed last month, drafted a four-page letter, expressing their concerns over construction delays and disturbances, safety issues, and amenities at the apartment complex.

They sent the letter to Residence Life and to Ambilng Company, the company that manages La Aldea.

The $28 million privately owned housing complex located at North Euclid Avenue and East Fifth Street, just north of Coronado Residence Hall, was supposed to be completed by mid-August, but many residents were surprised when they showed up on their move-in date to find they didn’t move into the complex.

Stephanie Castilllo, a management and decision systems graduate student, said she received a letter telling her she would be able to move into La Aldea on Aug. 15, but when she arrived from New Mexico with her mother, the complex was not ready, and she had to stay with a friend and pay to put her belongings in storage.

Serhy Porozyvsky, a watershed management graduate student, said he ran into a similar situation.

After traveling to the UA from Ukraine, he had to stay in a hotel for two weeks while he awaited the completion of his apartment.

Elizabeth Montano, the manager of La Aldea, said that while all residents were expected to be able to move in on Aug. 15, the building had not passed necessary building inspections by that date. About half of the complex’s 157 residents were placed in hotels, while others stayed with friends and family while they waited to move into the apartments.

She said the development company reimbursed students for the cost of their hotel stays.

While Porozyvsky said he was reimbursed, he said he still had to pay the entire amount of August rent to La Aldea even though he couldn’t move into the complex until the end of the month.

Montano said La Aldea did not reduce rent since displaced residents were provided with housing.

Apartments in the complex cost $720 per month for a one-bedroom, $6,000 for a two-bedroom and two bath for $530 per person, or a four-bedroom.

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