

ZAC ANTONIO ROMERO

PROFILE

Personal Information

Name	Zac Antonio Romero
Sex, Birthdate	Male, 07/16/2004
Address	Newport Beach, CA
Race/Ethnicity	White/Hispanic (Mexican-American)

Language

Spanish	First Language, Speak, Read, Write, Spoken at home
English	First Language, Speak, Read, Write, Spoken at home

FAMILY

Household

Parents	Divorced (August, 2013)
Home	Parent 1

Parent 1

Name	Mother – Reyna B. Romero, address: same as my home address
Birthplace	Los Angeles, CA
Occupation	Software Developer
Education	California Institute of Technology, BA, MS

Parent 2

Name	Father – Brian H. Romero, Address: Upland, CA
Birthplace	Montebello, CA
Occupation	Fuel Sales Representative
Education	Some College, no degree

Siblings

Name(s)	Zina Angelina Romero, 17 years old
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ZAC ANTONIO ROMERO

EDUCATION

School Galileo Academy (Grades 9-12)
Irvine, CA

Senior Year Courses

Galileo Academy

Senior English – Full Year

Honors Physics – Full Year

AP Calculus BC – Full Year

AP Biology – Full Year

Government/Economics – Full Year

Honors and Awards

Varsity Lacrosse – Captain (2021), League MVP

BioGENEius Global Sustainability Challenge, Biotechnology Institute – Honorable Mention 2021

I genetically modified a plant for drought or insect resistance

Future Plans

Prospective Major(s) Bio-Medical Engineering or Mechanical Engineering

Career Interests Food Engineer

Highest Degree Intended Ph.D.

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ACTIVITIES

Home Activity

9, 10, 11, 12
168 hw 52 wy

Big brother to my twin sister Zina
Due to COVID, I have had to help care for her and
be her tutor for school

School Activity

9, 10, 11, 12
15 hw 30 wy

Junior Varsity (9) and Varsity Lacrosse (10, 11, 12)
Captain, MVP Junior year and likely senior year

Internship

11, 12 - Summer
20 hw 8 wy

Zymo Research, Irvine
Intern, Bio Lab Department
Various projects while in a full 5 PPE suit

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TRANSCRIPT

Galileo Academy

1687 Newton Drive

Newport Coast, CA 92657

Transcript for Zac Antonio Romero

Grade 9 (2018-2019)	Fall	Spring	Grade 10 (2019-2020)	Fall	Spring
Freshman English	B-	C+	Sophomore English	B+	B-
Honors Spanish 2 (*)	A	A-	Geometry	A	A-
Algebra 1	A	A	Honors Chemistry (*)	A	A
Biology	B+	A-	Honors Spanish 3 (*)	A	A-
Global Perspectives	B-	C+	European History	B	C+
			SS HON Algebra 2 (*)	A	A
9th Grade GPA - Weighted	3.60	3.40	10th Grade GPA - Weighted	4.16	4.00
9th Grade GPA - Unweighted	3.40	3.20	10th Grade GPA - Unweighted	3.67	3.50
Grade 11 (2020-2021)	Fall	Spring	Grade 12 (2021-2022)	Fall	Spring
Junior English	B	C	Senior English		
US History	B-	C-	Honors Physics		
AP Environmental Science (*)	A	A-	AP Calculus BC (*)		
AP Spanish Lang/Culture (*)	B-	B+	AP Biology (*)		
AP Calculus AB (*)	A	A	Government/Economics		
11th Grade GPA - Weighted	4.00	3.40	12th Grade GPA - Weighted		
11th Grade GPA - Unweighted	3.60	3.00	12th Grade GPA - Unweighted		
			Cumulative GPA - Weighted (*) 3.81		
			Cumulative GPA - Unweighted 3.38		

This transcript is unofficial unless embossed with the school seal. All letter grades on this transcript, except Physical Education, are used in the calculation of the unweighted GPA. The weighted GPA is calculated by adding one point for AP and Honors courses which are marked with an asterisk (*). Also, a "+" or a "-" does not affect the GPA.

Fall 2021 grades will be available February 1, 2022.

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WRITING

Personal Essay

Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.

“slap slap slap” From my earliest memories, the “slap slap slap” sound sparked my interest in food science.

As a kid, my family would all pile into my dad’s Dodge Grand Caravan and drive to spend long weekends at my *abuelita’s* (grandmother) home in Earlimart, California (located in California’s Central Valley). After what seemed like a thousand hours getting there – not to mention my mother singing “Hollaback Girl” completely out of tune, we arrived. After rushing in to go to the bathroom – my dad did not believe in stopping for gas or a bathroom break, I would immediately go into the kitchen to see what my *abuelita* was cooking. There would always be something amazing simmering on the stove. And whatever it was, she always had *Abuelita’s Secret Sauce*. Words don’t do it justice so I won’t even try to describe it. Full, the kids settled around the table to play SlapJack – my twin sister would call it the “Slap Slap game”. But that isn’t what sparked my interest in food science.

Early the following morning – usually around 5:00 AM, I would hear “slap, slap, slap”. My grandpa was a farm laborer and had to leave to go pick whatever crop was in season. (Funny how I would speak to my *abuelita* in Spanish but my grandpa in English.) But, before he would leave, my *abuelita* would make homemade tortillas to make into burritos for him to take for his lunch. First you make the *masa* (dough). Then you pull off a small ball of dough and roll it with a rolling pin. My *abuelita* would use a dowel she got from the hardware store, a regular rolling pin did not have the right “touch”. The final step was to slap it between the palms of your hands. “slap slap slap”. I would hear these sounds every morning. I was the only one in my family who would sit on a stool in the kitchen as she made dozens of tortillas. While she was making the tortillas, we would talk about everything – usually about food. *Why do you use lard instead of Crisco?* – “Because it doesn’t taste right if you don’t.” *What does the baking soda do in the recipe?* – “The tortillas will not rise without it.” *Why do avocados turn brown after you open them up?* – Go ask your mother. So, I did. She told me to figure it out for myself and come back when I had the answer.

From that day on, I have always been fascinated with food – not just eating it, but the chemical reactions that take place when you cook it, how the method of cooking food changes its taste, the various methods of preserving food, and so on. One discovery lead to another which lead down a different path which lead to yet another discovery. Through this process of smoke alarms going off in my kitchen, to really upset stomachs (only make sushi with raw fish if you *really* know what you are doing), to spectacular flaming deserts, I was a *foodie* – and not just any *foodie* – a *food alchemist*.

This interest in food affected my own personal eating habits. I am a pescatarian – but only wild caught. After watching a Discovery Channel program about “Do You Know What Eating Meat Does to Our Planet?” I made a life choice. And I hope that my academic curiosity will be heightened in college with access to world-class faculty and facilities. And in the end, I hope to solve many of the world’s hunger-related problems with ... science.

And in case you are wondering, my *abuelita* shared with me the secret ingredient in her secret sauce. And no, it is not something goofy like “love” or “respect”. The secret ingredient is ... gotcha.

ZAC ANTONIO ROMERO

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

“Community disruptions such as COVID 19 and natural disasters can have deep and long-lasting impacts. If you need it, this space is yours to describe those impacts. Colleges care about the effects on your health and well-being, safety, family circumstances, future plans, and education, including access to reliable technology and quiet study spaces.” *Limit 250 Words*

COVID-19 has affected me in three specific ways.

- 1) The 2021 Varsity Lacrosse Season was modified due to the Pandemic. In the shortened season, I was voted Team Captain and League MVP. At this time, it is not clear whether there will even be a 2022 season.
- 2) My sister’s school cancelled in-person instruction. She stayed home with inconsistent virtual and in-home instruction. I assumed many of these responsibilities. Her presence also affected my ability to do my school work which affected my grades. She thought that since I was home, it was “after-school” play time.
- 3) Elderly family members moved in with us due to the uncertainty of the safety protocols at their residences. I gave up my room and shared a room with my sister. This too disrupted my normal study routine and affected my grades.

None of these reasons are excuses for my poor academic performance in the spring of my junior year, rather they are bits of information to help you understand the “new normal” in the Romero household. I would never, want my extended family to be put at risk nor my sister not get the instruction she needed and deserved. But something had to give. I ended up “trying” to do my homework at 2 AM which made for very long days. Trying to Zoom with only a few hours of sleep made concentrating difficult, not to mention that the TV in the other room was really loud. Noise cancelling headphones didn’t always work.

ZAC ANTONIO ROMERO

LAKE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY – GENERAL SUPPLEMENT

GENERAL

Preferred start term	Fall, 2022
Admission Plan	Regular Decision

ACADEMICS

1 st Choice Major	Bio-medical Engineering
2 nd Choice Major	Environmental Studies

CONTACTS

Contact 1	Virtual Interview
Contact 2	College Fair at Anaheim Convention Center

FAMILY

Sibling Applied	No	Relative(s) Attended	No
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LAKE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY – GETTING TO KNOW YOU

Please answer the following with a word, words, or a sentence as appropriate:

Your favorite book and its author – *The Phantom Tollbooth* by Norton Juster.

Your favorite website – Science & Cooking: From Haute Cuisine to Soft Matter Science (chemistry)

Your favorite recording – *Thriller* by Michael Jackson. My sister and I could dance to this video for hours.

Your favorite source of inspiration – Zina, my twin sister.

Your favorite line from a movie or book and its title – “I’ll be ... right here.” – *E.T.* One Halloween my sister dressed up as ET. All of the other kids laughed at her but she could not be happier. She went around touching everyone with her finger saying “I’ll be right here” and then giggling. She’s wrong, she is right here – inside me.

Two adjectives your friends would use to describe you – empathetic and devoted

Your favorite keepsake or memento – The dowel my grandmother used to roll the *masa* (dough) for tortillas.

If you could create a food truck, what type of food would you serve. Name the truck. – Mexican food like my *abuelita* (grandmother) used to make. *The Big Burro*. Imagine a menu board with an endless list of mouthwatering burritos. I am pescatarian – so I would specialize in burritos filled with *nopales* (cactus) and roasted corn with a spicy/sweet cream sauce. Or *frijoles de la olla* (special beans) and Oaxacan Cheese. You won’t leave hungry. As the saying goes – “*panza llena, corazón contento*” – “full belly, happy heart”

ZAC ANTONIO ROMERO

LAKE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY – WRITING SUPPLEMENT

Why are you a fit for Lake Washington University?

I had two requirements as I created my college list – an exceptional Biomedical Engineering major and an atmosphere where faculty focus on teaching and mentoring students – not just doing research. I believe LWU has both.

My goal is to major in Bio-medical Engineering. I hope to one day be a Food Engineer and by that I don't mean a cook. Food Engineers design and develop systems for the production, processing, distribution, and storing of food. My goal is to push the boundaries of the field to help solve world hunger by decrease the amount of food that is spoiled by improper production techniques. I am most excited to work in the Goddard Lab – Biomaterials and Biointerfaces in Food and Agriculture. Improved food viability and sustainability as a result of improved bio-degradable and eco-friendly packaging is a strong interest of mine. Check One.

My conversation with Dean Starnes was especially insightful as he shared with me his own experiences as a student and his many interactions with his faculty. Check Two.

There is actually a third requirement. I love the sport of Lacrosse and hope to make the team as a walk-on. If that does not happen – because the LWU Wolves are so good – then I would certainly enjoy playing on the club team.

We know that colleges ask a lot of hard questions on their applications. This one is not so hard and we promise, there is no hidden agenda – just have fun! If you had a theme song – a piece of music that describes you, what would it be and why? Please include the name of the song and the artist.

You were right. This was probably the easiest question to answer on the Lake Washington University application. My answer – in a heartbeat - *"Imagine"* by John Lennon. I honestly spend countless hours "imagining" how my sister's life would have been different if she did not have Down Syndrome. Never have I been embarrassed or ashamed to be around her. Rather, I would want her to have the best life possible. It hurts when I see her laughed at or made fun of because of what she does or how she looks. My biggest prayer is that she doesn't fully understand her condition. On the outside, she is the happiest person you will ever meet. I hope she never comprehends the evil sent her way. "You may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one. I hope someday you'll join me and the world will be as one."

Please briefly elaborate on one of your extracurricular activities or work experiences in the space below. (Minimum 50 words, Maximum 100 words).

My twin sister Zina has Down Syndrome. I am her father, teacher, caregiver, personal chef, entertainer, companion, protector, co-conspirator, audience of one, confidant, guest at her tea party, dance partner, but most importantly of all, I am her brother – technically her older brother by 18 minutes and 12 seconds. The other activities that I do are fun. However, my relationship with Zina is special and, in the end, I believe I am who I am and who I am destined to be because of her.

ZAC ANTONIO ROMERO

Secondary School Report – Part 2

Letter of Recommendation

Dear Admissions Officer,

Zac Antonio Romero is a hard-working student who takes pride in the fact that he has been a successful student. He is currently a senior in good standing at Galileo Academy, a highly academic college preparatory Charter School with a focus on math and science with demanding teachers and an unusually rigorous curriculum. Zac has earned a solid weighted overall academic GPA (grades 9-12) of **3.81**. He has also earned perfect scores (5) on all of the AP exams he took – Environmental Science, Spanish Language/Culture, and Calculus AB. When it comes to science, Zac is a phenome. Zac has challenged himself by taking every Honors and AP classes offered in science offered at Galileo Academy.

Outside of the classroom, sustainability is Zac's life. This past summer, he interned at Zymo Research, a bio-tech research company in Irvine. He worked in one of their labs. He sent me photos of himself in a full Level 5 PPE suit. He also mentioned that this experience helped him in the BioGENEius Global Sustainability Challenge sponsored by the Biotechnology Institute. His paper on how he genetically modified a plant for drought and insect resistance garnered him honorable mention in their competition.

I would be remiss if I did not mention Zac's unique home environment. He lives with his mom (single parent), his twin sister (she has Down Syndrome), and various elderly family members who moved in due to the instability of their living arrangements at various senior living facilities. All of these un-related factors created a perfect storm for the second semester of his junior year. While he did well in his math and science classes, his grades took a hit in his other classes – anything that required lots of reading and interpretation. He could do math and science in the middle of the halftime show at the Super Bowl without batting an eye. He was incredibly disappointed by his grades. But he understands that he is not alone in his family and there were no other solutions. I am told by his teachers that Zac has made the necessary adjustments and is doing quite well. Updates from his teachers indicate that his fall grades are on their way to returning to their normal high level of achievement.

Zac is a responsible, dedicated, and often quiet young man who is willing to put in the work to reach his goals. It is my pleasure to recommend him for admission to your university.

Best regards,

Dr. Nora Lumme, M.A. EdD

(949) 555-1963

ZAC ANTONIO ROMERO

TEACHER - Letter of Recommendation

RECOMMENDATION FOR: **ZAC ANTONIO ROMERO**

I am writing to express my strongest support for the candidacy of Zac Romero. He is one of the most talented students I have ever had the privilege of teaching and I urge you to favorably review his application.

Zac is a gracious and unassuming young man. The breadth of his character, coupled with his heart-felt sense of humanity, distinguishes Zac amongst all of the students I have worked with during three decades as an educator.

Zac is a young man of incredible intellect. He has an innate curiosity and zeal for learning. I taught Zac Biology, Honors Chemistry, and he is currently enrolled in my AP Biology class – arguably the toughest class we offer. His intuitive understanding of science is impressive. Other than his freshman year, he has never incorrectly answered a single problem on any exam I have given. I always count on him to help tutor others in the class who were having difficulty in understanding the challenging material. His devotion to not just learning the material but thoroughly understanding the material is noteworthy. Zac was and continues to be a pleasure to teach and an enormous asset to my class. He is clearly a young man of exceptionally high aptitude and is willing to work hard to study beyond the standard course material and to make lasting contributions in the classroom. He wanted to take a BioEthics class at UC Irvine. However, due to the pandemic, priority was given to currently enrolled UCI students. He is, however, on the waiting list for a place in the class.

Finally, I was his advisor for the research that he presented as part of the BioGENEius Global Sustainability Challenge sponsored by the Biotechnology Institute. It is truly unbelievable the high level of innate ability and intuitive understanding of biotechnology this young man has. His work was recognized with the Honorable Mention 2021 Award.

In summation, I give Zac Romero my highest possible recommendation. His talents in biotechnology are exceptional and his dedication is without parallel. He is also a genuinely nice guy. I firmly believe he will be a successful adult. He has a sense of compassion that I have not seen in others his age or, lately, many adults. I am quite certain that if accepted to your institution, he will make a positive and lasting contribution.

Respectfully,

Dr. Caryn E. Johnson

Chair, Math and Science Department, Galileo Academy

ZAC ANTONIO ROMERO

ZOOM INTERVIEW NOTES FOR: ZAC ANTONIO ROMERO

DATE: September 19, 2021

INTERVIEWER: Frank Jones, Associate Dean of Admission

When we connected via Zoom for Zac's interview, I knew immediately we were in for an interesting conversation. He was sitting on his bed furiously typing on his iPad. He was wearing a t-shirt that read "It might look like I'm listening, but in my head... I'm cooking." And off to the side of him, his sister Zina was eating yogurt and making faces at the camera. He kept telling her "Now Zina, remember this is very important so you have to sit quietly. At the end, I'll let you talk to Mr. Jones."

In a word – well, honestly there is not just one word to describe this guy – he is the sweetest and most genuine guy I have meet in years. We reviewed his transcript together and had a conversation about how his grades are lopsided in favor of math and science as well his less than stellar performance in the second semester of his junior year. He explained about the circumstances of how his "perfect" study world was turned upside down because of the COVID pandemic. Not once did he make any excuses. He was direct and un-emotional. I believed him.

We also talked about his internship at Zymo Research. He started explaining some of the stuff he was doing – it was all beyond my basic understanding of ... well, just beyond. But he was animated and super excited about what he was doing.

When I asked him if there was anything he wanted to share, he looked me in the eyes and told me that his sister is the most important person in the world to him. Adding, he wants an LWU education to do research on how the food we eat affects human development. He then stole a sideways glance at his twin sister who had finished her yogurt and was busy coloring. He also shared his excitement about the possibility of continuing his research opportunities at Zymo Research.

Bottom line – I really liked him.

Frank