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## MECHA

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students, said Roscoe Caron, a teacher at the school. In the program, middle school students meet with college students from MEChA, the Chicano student union.

Caron said Ganas means "desires" in Spanish and represents the desire for the younger students to achieve their goals.

"It's a combination of reaffirming and learning more about their culture, being academically successful and learning the skills of leaders," he said.

Alma Reyes-Guillen, 14, said she wants to be a lawyer or a doctor when she grows up. The MEChistas, as the University students are called, are to thank for the motivation, she said.

She said the MEChistas — who visit Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays after school — act as role models for her because they are in college.

Xochitl Soto, 14, said she likes having a place to go after school, but her favorite part of the program is "getting to know the MEChistas."

"It kind of gives a lot of kids somebody to look up to," she said.

Members of MEChA have been involved with the middle school's program since its creation, Caron said. He said the MEChA members are the perfect mentors for middle-school students who may eventually be the first generation in their families to attend college.

"The very existence of these Latino

(University) students says that is possible," he said.

Carmen Williams, a 13-year-old middle school student, said she appreciates the extra help with her schoolwork the MEChistas give her.

"They're nice and they always help me with my homework," she said.

MEChA's Ganas Coordinator Liz A. Perez said the MEChistas also serve as people with whom the middle schoolers can identify.

"Kids need to see more of their own culture," she said. "We talk to them about their culture — anything they want to know."

Esteban Guillen, 13, said the MEChistas help him deal with struggles he faces as a young Latino by sharing their childhood experiences.

During the past eight years, the University students have also helped to bring statewide recognition to the program. Caron said the middle school students have had their voices heard statewide by leaders.

Caron said he thinks the reason MEChistas volunteer their time is because many of them would have liked to have had similar experiences when they were young.

MEChista Gerardo Rodriguez said he was the oldest child in his family, so he understands what it's like for the students who may not have anyone to look up to.

"That just changes everything," he said. "That's huge, knowing that you have someone that you can depend on."

Contact the higher education/student life/student affairs reporter at [chelseaduncan@dailyemerald.com](mailto:chelseaduncan@dailyemerald.com).

## FIRE

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first heard the alarm. His account of what happened is slightly different than Williams'.

"The whole hall was full of smoke," he said. "We ran outside and talked to Andrew and he said, 'I think John is still in the room.'"

Matheny said he and a fellow resident entered the building and found Gutman sleeping alone in the room.

Matheny said they shook Gutman and pulled him out of bed. Gutman woke up and they supported him as he stumbled out, Matheny said.

Gutman and Byrne said they might be dead if circumstances would have been different Sunday. Neither was injured nor transported to the hospital as a result of the fire. It was the first time they had burned a candle in the room, Gutman said.

Mike Eyster, assistant vice president of Student Affairs and director of University Housing, said burning a candle in any residence hall room is a violation of housing rules.

Gutman said he and Byrne faced a hearing with University officials at 5 p.m. Sunday to discuss the cost of repainting the walls and replacing the carpeting — about \$26,000.

Gutman and Byrne will also face a hearing in front of a judicial committee and may face fines and a possible eviction from the residence hall, Gutman said, adding that he didn't know when that would occur.

Contact the people/culture/faith reporter at [jaredpaben@dailyemerald.com](mailto:jaredpaben@dailyemerald.com).

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