



**BRIGHTSTAR**  
SCHOOLS

# ALUMNI NEWS

ALUMNI SUPPORT & COLLEGE SUCCESS PROGRAM

BY GENOVEVA CORTES (310) 948-1733 GCORTES@BRIGHTSTARSCHOOLS.ORG

## BSSCA CLASS OF 2015-2016

### JENNIFER GONZALEZ

**BSSCA ALUMNAE 2015**  
**CSU FULLERTON 2020**  
**MAJOR: CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND CHICANA & CHICANO STUDIES**



CONGRATULATIONS TO THE CSUF GRADUATE!!!

Although college is an adventure in itself, this recent CSU Fullerton graduate included a couple of study abroad adventures to her college experience. For her trip to Puerto Rico, she had the opportunity to visit the small island of Vieques for 3 weeks and studied at the local university, learning about the history, it's people, and seeing first-hand the destruction the US Navy's testing and bombing has done to the ecosystem and the population. Since much of the land is infertile and the citizens have some of the highest rates of cancer, food is scarce and needs to be shipped from the mainland in Florida where it's then shipped to the main island of Puerto Rico before it gets to the island of Vieques, usually rotten and inedible. However, residents, activists, environmentalists, and students have mobilized to restore a section of the island called La Finca, back to its natural habitat and are working on growing their own food. Jennifer was able to secure a grant for her trip to Puerto Rico making it very inexpensive even though "study abroads" are covered through financial aid if you qualify.



IN VIETNAM WITH HER FRIENDS

Her second trip was to Vietnam during the Winter break. While studying at the local university, she learned that the Vietnamese economy is dependent on two sources of revenue: tourism and the coffee industry. She had the opportunity to visit a coffee plantation and learned the entire process of how coffee is made from harvesting the coffee beans to roasting them. She was struck by how similar the Vietnamese culture is to the Latino culture, noticing the abundance of delicious street food and makeshift restaurants on the sidewalks with just a few overturned boxes to sit on and lively conversation. "I went somewhere I never thought I'd go...You grow when you go far away, when you're put in a new situation."

What's next for Jennifer? She recently graduated from CSUF and will be moving this September to Madrid, España where will be teaching English at the elementary school level. Americans have been banned from traveling to any country that is part of the European Union due to the high Covid-19 infection rates but the Spanish Consulate is making exceptions for certain careers like Jennifer's.



ON THE ISLAND OF PUERTO RICO WITH THE FLAG.

Eventually, she plans to return to the US and earn her teaching credential so she can become an elementary or middle school teacher and instill in her students her love for world travel and learning about other people and cultures.

# BSSCA CLASS OF 2017-2020

BY MIKE CARRERA

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## JENNIFER ESTRADA

**BSSCA ALUMNAE 2018**  
**CSU LOS ANGELES, EXPECTED GRAD 2022**  
**MAJOR: CHILD DEVELOPMENT**



JENNIFER GIVING A CLASS PRESENTATION



JENNIFER PRESENTING A CLASS PROJECT  
 BOTTOM ROW, FAR RIGHT

College is a hard system to navigate. Students have to deal with financial aid questions, figure out their major and career goals, find and apply for internships for their sophomore and junior year, manage a social and family life, and work a part-time job sometimes, all while maintaining good grades on a full-time class schedule. Jennifer Estrada has successfully navigated her 2 years at CSULA. She discovered what her career goals are and as she enters her Junior year she is starting to look for internships at a hospital.

Through determination and resourcefulness, Jennifer has managed to maintain a 3.5 GPA and take 15 units each semester, no easy feat! Her goal is to graduate in 4-years and begin her career in Child Development in a hospital setting. Jennifer thought of becoming a teacher but after taking more upper division Child Development classes, she discovered she would rather be in a hospital setting working with children as a possible Child Life Specialist.

One of the most important things about college is who you know and the experience you have. Jennifer understands that if she wishes to find a job after graduation, she'll need to start getting experience while in college. It will mean she needs to add another thing to her plate, but she knows with no experience her options are limited after graduation. To start getting some experience, Jennifer spent her summer reviewing her resume, cover letter and researching volunteer and internship opportunities. She has advocated for herself by reaching out to professors for support and opportunities. Although the impact of COVID-19 had made the search a lot more difficult, she is still optimistic and hopes to find an internship during her Junior year at CSULA.

This high-achieving student is making the most of her college experience by prioritizing her learning but also carving out some time for socializing and networking. "So far, I have built amazing friendships and have enjoyed my classes, especially those that require service hours around children. I will not lie; school can get stressful and challenging. However, I have the support of my parents, who push me day by day to achieve my goals. The Alumni Support Coordinator has been a great mentor and a vital part of my success, too; she has been a crucial guide in the many decisions I have made. I know I can always count on her. For all the students that will begin this fantastic journey soon, I recommend you be willing to try new and unfamiliar things outside your comfort zone. I suggest not hesitating to ask for help; there is always someone you can reach out too. Also, become aware of all the resources your school offers. Enjoy this adventure and give it your all!"



# VAHS CLASS OF 2017-2020

BY KYLE PETRIE

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## XOCHITL CANDELARIO



**VAHS ALUMNA CLASS OF 2017  
CALIFORNIA LUTHERAN UNIVERSITY; EXPECTED GRAD 2021  
MAJOR: POLITICAL SCIENCE**

A standout student since her days in the founding class at VAHS, Xochitl Candelario has always been bound for greatness. In addition to her prowess in the classroom; "Xochi" was one of Valor's top athlete's as a volleyball player. She has continued that competitive spirit during her three year stint at Cal Lutheran University in Thousand Oaks, California, where she has consistently maintained a balance between academics, work, and her social life.

Although she entered Cal Lutheran as an undeclared student - her career aspirations have begun to shift into the political realm. She has always been interested in the way our government works, but it was a writing and political science class during the spring of her freshman year that cemented her focus in that area of study. After taking a summer course this year, she is directly on track for graduation after the spring semester of the 2020-21 school year. Always a beacon of light to her friends, family, and teachers - we know that Xochi's future shines brightly and we wish her the best!

## EDDY CAMACHO

Since his time in Ms. Patel's sciences classes while at VAHS, Eddy has always expressed an interest in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) fields. During his freshman year at Sonoma State University he entered as a Computer Science major and has enjoyed his studies in the field. Although he's focused on computers for his studies and as his major, Eddy appreciates the robust curriculum at Sonoma State. In addition to classes in his major, he's been able to develop his skills in both writing and critical thinking with Sonoma's focus on developing its students as writers.

Eddy's older brother Benny was a member of Valor's founding class in 2017. Benny set off for CSU East Bay, and in many ways served as Eddy's motivation and role model for expanding his horizons beyond the San Fernando Valley. Although that has certainly presented challenges; true to form - Eddy remains optimistic about his experiences away from home. In Eddy's words: "It was really exciting to move far away from home and to branch out to a school that was much larger than Valor. It's definitely presented challenges, but it has been great to meet people from all over the state and the world!"

**VAHS ALUMNUS CLASS OF 2019  
SONOMA STATE UNIVERSITY; EXPECTED GRAD 2023  
MAJOR: COMPUTER SCIENCE**





## RKHS CLASS OF 2020

BY STEPHANIE CALDERON (310)876-4368 SCALDERON@BRIGHTSTARSCHOOLS.ORG

### DARRYL MATTEWAKANG

**RKHS ALUMNUS CLASS OF 2020**  
**CAL STATE UNIVERSITY, LOS ANGELES; EXPECTED GRAD 2024**  
**MAJOR: PSYCHOLOGY**

Darryl is an outgoing student who is ready for life as a college Freshman! During his time at RKHS, Darryl played basketball and enjoyed hanging out with his friends. Since he is not able to go on campus for the time being, he plans to do his learning from home and also work part time making delicious sandwiches at a local shop. He is ready to start his fall semester strong as a Psychology major but is looking forward to when he is able to go to campus and become involved in campus clubs and intramural sports.



**RKHS ALUMNUS CLASS OF 2020**  
**UC, RIVERSIDE, EXPECTED GRAD DATE 2024**  
**MAJOR: MECHANICAL ENGINEERING**

Angel is one of the founding graduates of RKHS and will be continuing his educational journey at UCR this fall. He will be majoring in Mechanical Engineering and looks forward to his life as an independent college student. In spite of Covid-19, Angel will actually be living in an off-campus apartment near UCR this Fall. He is both excited and nervous about moving away from home into his first apartment. Angel is looking forward to having an apartment where he can strengthen the study skills he will need to be successful in his Mechanical Engineering major, one of the most demanding majors. He will also need time to adjust to studying on the fast-paced quarter system which is 10 weeks instead of 16 weeks like the semester system. He is excited and ready for life as a UCR Highlander!



# BRIGHT STAR SCHOOLS ALUMNI SUPPORT & COLLEGE SUCCESS TEAM

All Bright Star Schools Alums, high school graduates, will be supported in graduating from college for up to 6 years. Our goal is for our Alumni to earn a Bachelor's, Associate's, Career Technical Education degree, or workforce development certificate from an accredited college or program. If you are a BSS Alumni from the class of 2015-2020, we will be there to help you navigate, thrive, and succeed in graduating from higher education. If you have paused your education or want to get started in a program tailored to your goals and circumstances, please reach out to us so we can help you before your membership in the program expires.

## KYLE PETRIE

BA, BOWDOIN COLLEGE

VAHS ASCS COORDINATOR  
SUPPORTING CLASS OF 2017 - 2020  
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Kyle Petrie has worked in urban public education for over 12 years. He initially entered the field as a high school history teacher in the Bronx, NY, as part of Teach For America. After his time in New York, Kyle spent seven years as an AP teacher, advisor, coach, and Director of Alumni Support at Gary Comer College Prep on Chicago's south side.



As the ASCS Coordinator at Valor Academy High School, Kyle's primary responsibilities revolve around ensuring that all Valor alumni receive adequate support with the financial, academic, and social-emotional concerns that they face while pursuing higher education. Kyle is primarily motivated by the belief that higher education is the foundation that will allow our students to be successful and happy in both their careers and personal lives.

## MIKE CARRERA

BA, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, RIVERSIDE  
M. ED. AND PPS, UNIVERSITY OF LA VERNE

BSSCA ASCS COORDINATOR  
SUPPORTING CLASS OF 2017 - 2020  
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Mike Carrera has worked in education for over seven years, five of which have been at Bright Star Schools. Mike is a first-generation college graduate and earned his Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of California, Riverside in Latin American Studies and History. He also earned his Pupil Personnel Services credential and Master's in Education degree in 2019 in Education Counseling from the University of La Verne.



Throughout the years, Mike has held various roles at BSSCA and has assisted students and families on multiple levels. He is passionate about supporting the student body at BSSCA and is a firm believer that higher education can positively shift a student's life and career choices. As the new ASCS Coordinator, Mike is determined to assist all BSSCA Alums in navigating higher education and in contributing to students' success in college and career.

## STEPHANIE CALDERON

BA, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES  
M.ED. CSU, LONG BEACH COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

RKHS ASCS COORDINATOR  
SUPPORTING CLASS OF 2020  
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Stephanie Calderon has over 6 years of experience supporting students and their families in college access and success programs. She currently serves as the Alumni Support and College Success Coordinator for Rise Kohyang High School. Her goal is to support all RKHS Alumni with their post-secondary plans to ensure they accomplish their goals and aspirations for the future.



Stephanie is a first-generation college graduate. She obtained her bachelors in 2014 from UCLA in Women Studies. Upon graduating college she decided she wanted to help facilitate the process for applying and earning a degree for youth in her community of Los Angeles.

## GENOVEVA CORTES

BA, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES  
M.ED. HARVARD GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

ASCS DIRECTOR  
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Genoveva Garibay Cortes has over two decades of experience working as an elementary and middle school teacher, K-12 and college administrator, and program coordinator. She was Bright Star Schools' founding math teacher for Stella Middle Charter Academy in 2003, and currently serves as the Director of the Alumni Support and College Success (ASCS) Program for the organization.



Geno developed and launched Bright Star's ASCS Program to support the organization's alumni to persist in and graduate from higher education. ASCS tracks, supports, and coaches Bright Star Schools' alumni to get to and through higher education, with a goal of 60% of Bright Star Schools alumni graduating with a bachelor's or associate's degree, vocational certificate, or from a workplace development program within six years of high school graduation.