



ALUMNI NEWS

ALUMNI SUPPORT & COLLEGE SUCCESS PROGRAM

BY GENOVEVA CORTES

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BSSCA CLASS OF 2015-2016

ANTHONY SALAS

BSSCA ALUMNUS 2015
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE
MAJOR: PSYCHOLOGY

As a Freshman, Anthony fell a little behind in some classes. When he saw his friends graduating four or five years later or would be walking through campus on his way to class and pass the graduation stage and podium, the thought that he wouldn't graduate gave him anxiety. He decided to make some changes in his behavior and mindset. "I had been slacking off but I put my mind to it that I needed to graduate. I needed to be responsible and manage my time better. If you work too many hours or procrastinate, you fall behind in your classes. And in college, classes cost money!"

Some changes he made were to prioritize his most important classes and figuring out how much time he needed to spend on studying, exercising, training for his sports activities like boxing, working his part-time job at Target, and simply pacing his assignments. "I had to stay on top of my deadlines because if not, things pile up." Like many college students, there were occasions when Anthony decided to stay out late instead of staying home to study or get a good night's sleep, only to be exhausted in class the next day. "I remember thinking, well that was a bad idea." While this future mental health care practitioner is only one semester away from graduating, he's already thinking about graduate school and deciding whether he wants to earn his Master's, Ph.D. or Psy. D. His advice to our Alums: "if you move into the dorms (or off-campus housing), keep your head in the game, stay focused and get your work done because it's easy to lose your priority."



ALEXUS GALVEZ

BSSCA ALUMNA 2015
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, RIVERSIDE ALUMNA 2019
MAJOR: BIOLOGY



When Alexis embarked on her undergraduate college journey at UCR, she had planned on pursuing a pre-medicine track as a biology major but changed her mind about graduate school. It's very common for college students to change majors, career plans, and their thoughts about continuing on to graduate school for their Master's or Doctorate degrees. College is also a great place to continue your education after high school even if you don't know what you want to do for your career because it will expose you to different fields and help you narrow your choice. Alexis is exploring careers working for the county and has a number of options before she decides what is right for her.



During her time at UCR, Alexis felt the campus was welcoming to her and was able to make friends through various support programs the university offers. "It's diverse and it made me comfortable because of who I am. I never felt out of place. There are lots of resources like the African Student Center, LGBTQ, Women's Center, and the Chicano Student Programs. To any Freshman college students moving away from home, Alexis advises living in the dorms so that you can meet more people but if you can't, "don't be afraid to be a little more social." She also recommends joining a club or fraternity/sorority. Some of them are free or inexpensive. "I was in a cheap coed pre-med fraternity and I loved it! I still keep in touch with the friends I made and it gave me a lot of experience. I even got CPR certified through the frat."

BSSCA CLASS OF 2017-2020

BY MIKE CARRERA

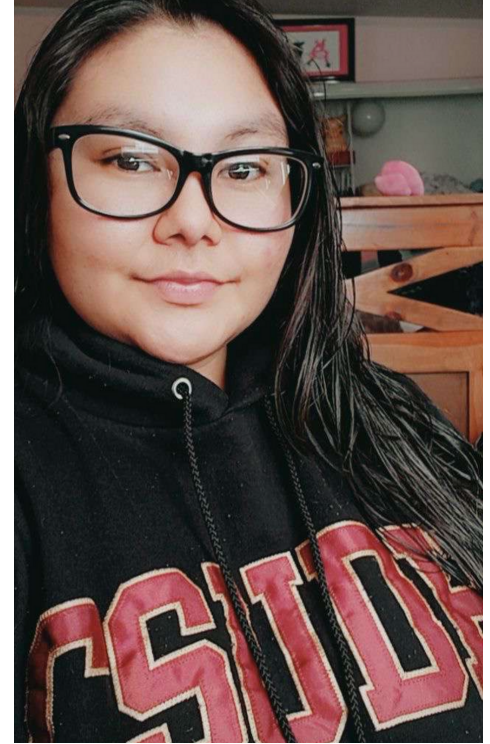
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MARIA DIAZ DAVILA

BSSCA ALUMNA 2018
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, DOMINGUEZ HILLS
MAJOR: PSYCHOLOGY
MINOR: CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Maria Diaz Davila has spread her eagle wings and has embraced her time at California State University, Dominguez Hills. Her time with BSSCA's class of 2018 might seem like months ago but she's on track to graduate from college next spring semester. "Class of 2022!" How does that sound? A Psychology major and Criminal Justice minor with a 3.3 cumulative GPA, Maria plans to become a School Counselor to help those in need. Perhaps a career at Bright Star Schools is in her future? I asked Maria if she's always wanted to work in education and she shared that "initially I wanted to become a police officer, but in my last year at BSSCA I took a Psychology class with Mr. Moreno, and that changed my perspective. I gained insight into the human mind and a better understanding of mental health. I knew then that I wanted to help underprivileged youth."

Maria attributes her success to her relentlessness and drive to become the best version of herself every day. She has always wanted to be the first in her family to graduate from college and in a few months, she will accomplish that goal. I also asked what has helped her in these past 3 years. "I believe my time-management skills, and taking advantage of all the resources offered here at Dominguez as helped me succeed. I've used the Women Research Center and Queer Culture & Resource Center countless times. I feel that many students are scared to ask for help and miss out on all the great resources offered in school."



JULISSA HERNANDEZ

BSSCA ALUMNA 2020
SANTA MONICA COLLEGE
MAJOR: PSYCHOLOGY



BSSCA 2020 Alumna Julissa Hernandez, a Santa Monica College freshman just finished her first semester with straight A's. As a high school senior, Julissa did not get accepted to the university she was hoping for and decided to attend SMC. A psychology major, she plans to transfer to UCLA and then graduate school for her Master's to become a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. In her short time at SMC, Julissa was quick to take advantage of resources and enrolled in the Adelante program, a transfer program that offers priority enrollment, specialized counselors who she must see 3 times a semester, networking opportunities, and much more. I asked Julissa what has changed for her this year? "My time-management skills! I took a Counseling 20 and it showed me how to manage my time more efficiently. I now use my planner every day which helps me finish all my assignments with less stress." And also, studies show that when you aren't rushing to get work done at the last minute, the higher quality it is. It's only a matter of time before Julissa will be walking down Bruin Walk on the UCLA campus to her next class.

VAHS CLASS OF 2017-2020

BY KYLE PETRIE

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JONATHAN GOMEZ

VAHS ALUMNUS 2018
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE
MAJOR: COMPUTER SCIENCE MINOR: MATH

**What is the biggest difference between high school and college?**

The biggest difference between high school and college is that most of the time you are going to be teaching yourself. All of your work, deadlines, and keeping track of test dates is all up to you, so it is a key to always make sure you are organized and have some sort of daily organization tool.

How has the transition been from Valor to a school with many more students?

Much of the time, in your early years in college, you are usually sitting in lecture halls filled with 100+ students. The best way to get through these bigger classes is to find your group of friends and simulate a mini Valor within your friend group. Creating study sessions, going over the material together, and doing what Valor taught us best was significantly better than going into a class alone with no strategy.

Have you developed any new hobbies or interests in college?

I've enjoyed coding and creating Android apps. I love to create software, solve complex discrete math problems, and apply these solutions to my code. When I am not constantly on my computer, I love to travel and go to new places. Sadly, because of COVID I haven't been able to do much of that, so I've defaulted back to what I love to do most which is running hiking trails. This is something we used to do in cross country and I still run the La Tuna Canyon trail to this day.

Which teacher or classes from Valor have had the greatest impact on your ability to be successful in college?

Mrs. Mann had the biggest impact on my life because she inspired me to continue my degree in a STEM field. She helped me find my love for math and made the subject exhilarating, interesting, and full of plot twists. I want to thank Mrs. Mann for helping me find my passion and giving me a solid framework for learning math at a higher level.

Knowing what you know now, what advice would you give yourself as a high school senior?

Take your high school classes seriously. To be able to graduate in four years, I had to take pre-calc I and II, Calculus I, II, and III in the span of a year. I could have avoided ever having to do that, if I took my classes seriously in high school, especially all of my AP classes. Additionally, I would tell myself to treat my teachers with the utmost respect because for my teachers to get to where they are now, it is extremely difficult and should be acknowledged. Lastly, I would tell myself to start reading daily, because not only would this help with improving your writing skills, it would help with overall focus and attention span.

RKHS CLASS OF 2020

BY STEPHANIE CALDERON

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KEVIN YI

RKHS ALUMNUS 2020

SANTA MONICA COLLEGE; EXPECTED GRAD 2022

MAJOR: SOCIAL SCIENCES



Kevin was one of the founding students at RKHS. He is currently a first year student at Santa Monica College taking general coursework in the social sciences. Kevin was unsure about a major when he started school, but is now enjoying classes in Psychology and Sociology. He's considering pursuing these majors as he prepares to transfer to a 4 year university.

From the beginning Kevin has been proactive about his college education starting with taking classes over the summer to get ahead in the 60 transferable units he will need to transfer. Determined to get out of SMC and transfer in two years, Kevin will be applying to transfer this Fall 2021 for Fall of 2022. To help him achieve this goal, he has been taking a full 15-unit course load throughout the year.

Despite starting school during a global pandemic, Kevin hasn't let this challenge stop him from accomplishing his goals. He's making sure to take advantage of the opportunities presented to him and is accessing all the resources he needs to succeed. Last Spring while still a Senior at RKHS, he applied to the SMC Scholars Program and was accepted! As part of the Scholars program he receives priority registration, special advising at least 3 times a year, access to classes that are open only to Scholars students, mentorship, and guidance within the SMC community. Over the summer, Kevin took a counseling class where he learned the basics of navigating community college and preparing to transfer. He used those skills and knowledge to help propel him in his first full semester of school where he did excellent in all his classes.

Looking ahead, Kevin hopes to continue his academic success and begin researching the universities he will apply to and continue to get support from the ASCS program in helping him transfer. and processes to begin the transfer applications in the near future. He knows that his time at SMC is limited, so he is definitely trying to make the best of the current situation and learning from this unique experience. Once he transfers he is excited to continue studying the social sciences and expanding his knowledge of career opportunities. While he doesn't know exactly what that may be yet, he is definitely on the right path towards figuring it out.

FUN FACTS

- **17-18% Freshman acceptance rate to UCLA**
 - **30-33% Transfer Student acceptance rate to UCLA**
 - **90% Scholars Transfer Student acceptance rate to UCLA**
- *for more information and help, contact your ASCS Coordinator**

WWW.BRIGHTSTARSCHOOLS.ORG/ALUMNISUPPORT

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.

KYLE PETRIE

BA, BOWDOIN COLLEGE

VAHS ASCS COORDINATOR
SUPPORTING CLASS OF 2017 - 2020
KPETRIE@BRIGHTSTARSCHOOLS.ORG

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.

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.

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.

GENOVEVA CORTES

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

ASCS DIRECTOR
SUPPORTING BSSCA CLASS OF 2015 - 2016
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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.