



BRIGHTSTAR
SCHOOLS

ALUMNI NEWS

ALUMNI SUPPORT & COLLEGE SUCCESS PROGRAM

BY GENOVEVA CORTES

GCORTES@BRIGHTSTARSCHOOLS.ORG

BSSCA CLASS OF 2015-2016

ABRAHAM LOZANO

BSSCA ALUMNUS 2016

CSUN ALUMNUS 2020

MAJOR: BACHELOR OF SCIENCE, MECHANICAL ENGINEERING

CSUN SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING AND COMPUTER SCIENCE

MASTER OF MECHANICAL ENGINEERING, EXP GRAD DATE SPRING 2022



This budding Mechanical Engineer wasted no time at CSUN. No sooner had he completed his Bachelor of Science degree in the Spring, Abraham subsequently enrolled in the Master's in Mechanical Engineering program, with a focus on Mechanical System Design, last Fall 2020 at CSUN. It's a rigorous 2 year program but Abraham did get a head start because he took the opportunity to enroll in a few graduate level courses as an undergraduate.



Something he enjoyed about his experience at CSUN was his ability to go at his own pace which for Abraham meant going quickly! It was common for him to take anywhere from 15-18 units a semester, earn mostly A's with a few B's, and work part-time on the side as an on-campus tutor. That job helped his resume stand out and lead to him being hired for a competitive internship. During his Senior year, he interned at Skyworks Solutions, a company that makes microchip communication devices in the semiconductor field, where he was part of the Test Hardware department. He was paid very well, gained a lot of hands-on experience, and strengthened his interpersonal skills required to communicate in the professional field. His only regret is that he didn't get an internship sooner.

Abraham made sure to balance his academics with sports. He was part of the CSUN rugby team for 2 years which led to his other job working as the Building Manager for the CSUN Sports Club. His main responsibility was supervising practices as a First Aid Responder which has two requirements: an affinity for sports and a First Aid Responder Certificate from the American Red Cross. As a D1 Rugby athlete and CSUN employee, he was consistently supported by the Athletic Training Centers who provided aid to athletes in recovery, maintenance and injury prevention.



Now that Abraham is in graduate school, he works as a grader for senior engineering courses and is also developing the skills to earn his Ph.D, which he is considering. He is working with a professor who is mentoring him, which has Abraham also thinking about becoming a professor at a community college. He is keeping all his options open. Only time will tell where his ambitions lead him. And if he chooses to become a community college professor, some of you might become his student!

Since most internship applications are due in the fall, all Alums should start researching internships that summer after your Freshman year so that you'll have one lined up for the following summer, after your Sophomore year. It's also advisable to get another internship your Junior year as well. Internships provide practical experience where you can apply what you are learning in college to the real world, expand your network, and possibly lead to a job offer once you graduate with your degree.

WWW.BRIGHTSTARSCHOOLS.ORG/ALUMNISUPPORT

BSSCA CLASS OF 2017-2020

BY MIKE CARRERA

MCARRERA@BRIGHTSTARSCHOOLS.ORG

ALYSSA HERNANDEZ

BSSCA ALUMNA 2019
LOS ANGELES SOUTHWEST COLLEGE → CSU?
MAJOR: SOCIOLOGY

After only two years at Los Angeles Southwest College, Alyssa Hernandez is transferring to a CSU. At the moment, she hasn't decided where she'll be attending but will be choosing from CSULB, CSULA, CSUDH: colleges where she has already been accepted to. She is currently waiting on a response from CSUN. These great options can be contributed to her constant hard work, self-advocacy, and determination. While many students attempt to transfer in two years it can be challenging with class availabilities, prerequisites, and life responsibilities. In spite of the obstacles, Alyssa has been able to successfully navigate through all these barriers and has a lot more success to look forward to on the horizon.

I asked Alyssa what has helped her these past two years? She mentioned "I've made it my goal. There were times when it was difficult taking classes year-round in the winter and summer but I also wanted to make my parents proud. I knew my sacrifices would pay off. I also advocated for myself at Southwest reaching out to Laura Olga a counselor there who guided me." Alyssa plans to major in sociology and wants to work in a field where she is able to help students with disabilities. Even though she has not committed to any university yet, I have a strong intuition that she might be attending a campus near the beach.



IAIN BROWN

BSSCA ALUMNUS 2020
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA CRUZ
MAJOR: ROBOTICS ENGINEERING



As a Robotics Engineering major, Iain Brown along with thousands of other college students had been taking classes virtually since late September 2020 at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Not anymore! Iain finally arrived in Santa Cruz and is excited for the opportunity to finally live on campus! Although it was five and a half months later than what he initially expected, he is grateful for the opportunity to live up north. "I enjoy living on campus, I'm able to prioritize my schedule and also explore Santa Cruz. The campus is soothing and I'm able to relax after a stressful day on my computer. I just recently rode my bicycle down to Natural Bridges State Beach and it was awesome." While Iain settles down in Santa Cruz, he's been taking care of business since the start of his freshmen year. Although he admits his STEM classes can be challenging at times, he always finds ways to persevere through adversity. Iain also mentioned that he would be willing to show future UCSC students around the campus if they needed a tour in the future. Once this pandemic is over and it's safe to travel, we're sure this newly minted Banana Slug will be the perfect tour guide to BSS seniors on their CEL's.

VAHS CLASS OF 2017-2020

BY KYLE PETRIE

KPETRIE@BRIGHTSTARSCHOOLS.ORG

CRYSTAL MARTINEZ

VAHS ALUMNA 2019
CSULA EXPECTED GRADUATION: 2023
MAJOR: APPLIED MATHEMATICS
MINOR: FILM, TELEVISION, & DIGITAL MEDIA



What is the biggest difference between high school and college?

I think the biggest difference is accountability. At Valor, you don't have to worry about knowing what you need to do and when to do it; for the most part, it's laid out for you. In college, assignments pile up, exams grow closer, and before you know it, you need to plan your classes for the next quarter, but your professors and counselors aren't going to hold your hand and say you need to do this or study that. You need to figure out your own rhythm and keep yourself in check because no one else will.

How have you dealt with the transition to virtual learning?

As a commuter, it's definitely convenient for me. Instead of paying for parking passes and gas and driving all the way to campus, I can just get up and go online. As a student though, home has infinitely more distractions than the library, so I really have to control myself when it comes to getting work done.

Have you developed any hobbies or interests in college?

I've been delving deeper into the world of animation, so outside of class and homework, I've been working to improve my writing and drawing!

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

Ms. Patel, Mrs. Mann, and Mr. Mascolo have all been very influential figures during my years at Valor, as they each served as different facets of college life and prepared me for any difficulties I'd meet along the way. Without their hard work, dedication, and wisdom, I don't think I'd be where I am today.

RKHS CLASS OF 2020

BY STEPHANIE CALDERON

SCALDERON@BRIGHTSTARSCHOOLS.ORG

YESENIA ROJAS



RKHS ALUMNA 2020
CSULA EXPECTED GRADUATION 2024
MAJOR: NUTRITIONAL SCIENCE

Yesenia is a current freshman at CSULA studying Nutritional Science. She was a founding student at RKHS and is a first generation college student. During her time so far at CSULA, Yesenia has learned so much about transitioning into adulthood and college life--although her start to college has been out of the ordinary due to COVID-19 and distance learning. She hasn't let that stop her, and has actually found way to thrive at CSULA by making adjustments to her schedule and advocating for herself while in college.

Yesenia is in her second semester of school and says that her favorite class so far has been English. She enjoyed the readings and teaching style of her professor. During her time so far at CSULA, she was also accepted in the EOP program where she receives extra support and counseling. This program will help her choose the right classes and stay on a 4-year path to graduation which is her goal.

She shares that when the pandemic hit, it really impacted her day to day routine, so she is really looking forward to continuing moving forward and establishing a routine that works with her new life as a college student once it's safe to go back to campus and have in-person instruction. She has she has discovered so much about herself during this pandemic and has reflected a lot about simple things in life that she took for granted pre-pandemic. She really can't wait to get back to those simple things and has a new appreciation for them after almost a year in quarantine.

Yesenia has some sage advice for current high school students who may be struggling with some of the things she struggled with last year.

" Take advantage of your sleep and free time!!! Also make sure that despite the current circumstance, don't let the pandemic ruin your high school experience and especially seniors, enjoy your last year of high school! Call your friends to check up on them, schedule Zoom meetings to meet with them etc. Lastly, make sure to have good relationships with your teachers, school staff and administrators. They will help with reference letters when you need them for college."

Yesenia finished out her Fall Semester on the Dean's List at CSULA for her outstanding GPA and is on track to do even better during this semester. Go Yesenia, your Triton Family is proud!

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
SCALDERON@BRIGHTSTARSCHOOLS.ORG**

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
MCARRERA@BRIGHTSTARSCHOOLS.ORG**

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
GCORTES@BRIGHTSTARSCHOOLS.ORG**

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.