



ALUMNI NEWS

BY MIKE CARRERA

MCARRERA@BRIGHTSTARSCHOOLS.ORG

BSSCA CLASS OF 2017-2021

DARLOINE CRUZ SORIANO

BSSCA ALUMNA 2021
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LOS ANGELES
EXPECTED GRAD: SPRING 2025
BACHELOR'S OF SCIENCE: KINESIOLOGY



What do you enjoy most about CSULA?

I love the campus, it's really easy to navigate and find my classes. I commute to school but when I have classes all day, I like studying in the library or at the tables outside. Depending on the weather but if it's nice I prefer to be outside and enjoy the nice breeze. I also like the support of the teacher and counselor because they're helpful when I have questions. Lastly, I love the diversity of the student body at CSULA. Being a first-generation Latina college student can be intimidating or overwhelming and it's welcoming to see students from different backgrounds.

What's your major and why?

I'm currently a Kinesiology major. My goal is to be a Physical Therapist and help those in need. As a child, I went to the doctors and visited a Physical Therapist and at that point, I knew that's what I wanted to do. I've always enjoyed helping others, especially those who are in a vulnerable state.

What keeps you motivated during the pandemic?

I feel that Cal State LA is a new start for me. When I was in high school I didn't always try my best and that ultimately reflected in my grades. I feel that I can accomplish anything as long as I'm disciplined and take care of what I can control.

What advice would you give current high school students?

Don't be so hard on yourself. Figure out what your next goal is and work towards achieving it even if it's big or small. It's also important to be organized and manage your time well. I use a planner and put reminders on my phone to keep me productive.

How did your world perspective grow or change as a result of your time in college?

I feel that has changed dramatically since I've started at CSULA. It's not like high school because there's no one to constantly remind you to turn in your work or go to class. It's important to be accountable and take initiative because we're technically adults.

What is something you're looking forward to next school year?

I want to be involved. Since we started school virtually, it was difficult to make friends because no one would participate. Second, I plan to join a sorority because I feel it's a great way to meet students and network. Lastly, I want to get a job and start earning my own money.

VAHS CLASS OF 2017-2021

BY KYLE PETRIE

KPETRIE@BRIGHTSTARSCHOOLS.ORG

KIMBERLY LOPEZ

VAHS ALUMNA 2018
NEW YORK UNIVERSITY: EXPECTED GRAD MAY 2023
MAJOR: INTEGRATED DIGITAL MEDIA (IDM)



What skills/mindsets/attitudes did you learn while a student at Valor that helped you during your four years in college?

As a Valor student, I learned to advocate for myself and others, which has helped me navigate through life as a college student. Doing Speech & Debate got me to enjoy sharing my thoughts and talking to people.

How was the transition to a school out of state? What have you enjoyed most about your experience at NYU?

When I moved out of state, I had to learn to take care of myself and be more grounded than I was before. I've always had my head in the clouds, but I had to learn to pull myself back and stay focused. The best part of being at NYU is getting to meet people from all walks of life, and from all around the globe. It's also cool having access to free resources and equipment that are always at your disposal.

How has your world perspective grown or changed as a result of your time in college?

My time in and out of college has altered my perspective on what defines success. I used to think being successful meant acing every exam and having everything go according to plan. But now, to me - success is being healthy and following the path that I know feels right to me. I've met people along the way who have shown me that a fulfilling life can come in various shapes and forms. Meeting these inspiring people helped me realize that stumbling and getting lost doesn't lead you in the wrong direction, but rather just makes your path more interesting. I know that no matter what challenges I face, I'll be okay and I'll come out on top.

What do you wish you had known about college going in that could have helped you be even more successful?

Personally, I wish I had known how important physics would turn out to be. I would have taken Physics in high school, because it's easier to learn something for the first time in high school than in college. I also wish I had learned how to use Excel/ Google Sheets, because it's a good skill to learn early on.

What is your major and what do you plan on doing with your degree in the future?

I'm majoring in Integrated Digital Media (IDM) and I plan to use my major to find a job in UX design or media production.

Anything else you'd like to share or advice you would give to current students/staff at Valor?

Don't sweat the small stuff. You are all amazing.

RKHS CLASS OF 2020-2021

NESTOR CANCINOS-FLORES

Nestor is a current first year student in the Automotive Technology program at Los Angeles Trade Technical College. Nestor started his college journey at Los Angeles City College where he was exploring a career in Science with the goal of becoming a veterinary technician. After a year of classes at LACC he realized he was not happy and wanted to change his career choice. After meeting with Ms. Calderon and exploring his interests a little more, he felt that a Career Technical Education (CTE) program was a better option for him, especially since he enjoys working with his hands and learning about cars.

He took time off during the fall semester, then switched from LACC to LATTC. Now, he is studying automotive technology and plans to learn about the mechanics of different types of vehicles including electric and hybrid cars, which would make him more marketable in finding a job once he graduates as these cars are increasingly becoming more popular.



**RKHS ALUMNUS CLASS OF 2020
LOS ANGELES TRADE TECHNICAL COLLEGE
MAJOR: AUTOMOTIVE TECHNOLOGY CTE**



How did you decide to switch your college and major?

I felt that at LACC I wasn't being successful in the classroom setting, especially since my entire first year was online and I am a visual and hands-on learner. When I was able to learn more about the automotive technology program and found out that all the classes were in person I knew it was going to be a better option for me.

What are some differences between the online format and your in person classes?

All of the online classes were like regular subjects in order for me to transfer, but in the automotive programs the mechanic garage is my classroom which is probably the biggest difference. Another thing is that my classes are really late at night. Since most of the people work during the day, my classes happen at night, so it was a little bit of an adjustment to be in class until 9pm.

What are some resources that you've taken advantage of on campus?

I've taken advantage of many resources on both LACC and LATTC campuses from the time I started college. I was able to get support from Ms. Calderon to help me with enrolling in classes and connecting to different offices on campus like the DSPS office and EOPS. Thanks to these programs I was able to receive book stipends and financial aid to help me purchase materials for class and get accommodations in my classes too.

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 2016-2021, we will be there to help you navigate, thrive, and succeed in graduating from higher education.

STEPHANIE CALDERON

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

Stephanie Calderon has over 8 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.

**RKHS ASCS COORDINATOR
SUPPORTING CLASS OF 2020 & 2021
SCALDERON@BRIGHTSTARSCHOOLS.ORG**



MIKE CARRERA

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

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.

**BSSCA ASCS COORDINATOR
SUPPORTING CLASS OF 2017 - 2021
MCARRERA@BRIGHTSTARSCHOOLS.ORG**



KYLE PETRIE

BA, BOWDOIN COLLEGE

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.

Kyle Petrie has worked in urban public education for over 13 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.

**VAHS ASCS COORDINATOR
SUPPORTING CLASS OF 2017 - 2021
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GENOVEVA CORTES

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

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 55% 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.

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.

**ASCS DIRECTOR
SUPPORTING BSSCA CLASS OF 2016
GCORTES@BRIGHTSTARSCHOOLS.ORG**

