



ALUMNI NEWS

ALUMNI SUPPORT & COLLEGE SUCCESS PROGRAM

BY GENOVEVA CORTES

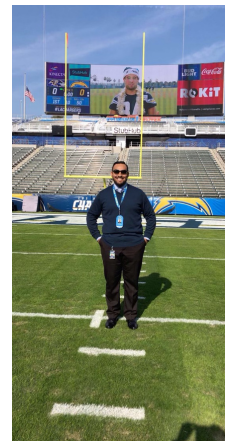
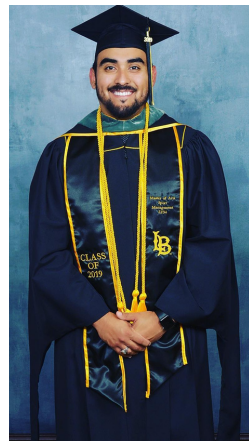
GCORTES@BRIGHTSTARSCHOOLS.ORG

BSSCA CLASS OF 2012-2016

GIOVANNY ROMERO

Giovanny Romero remembers going to soccer events as a child but never stopped to think about the amount of coordination, collaboration, and organization needed to host a large-scale event. Now he manages such events and many others at Dignity Health Sports Park where he has been working full time for the last couple of years since he graduated with his Master’s degree from CSULB.

As an Event Manager for a large stadium that is host to the Los Angeles soccer team Galaxy, he is no stranger to complexity involved in understanding all the nuances of hosting an event from start to finish. When it comes to the facility, Giovanny can handle anything from concerts, soccer games, and boxing matches, to name a few, to commercial and television shoots. Now that the pandemic is slowing down, Dignity Health Sports Complex was given the green light to operate at full capacity starting on June 16. He is looking forward to going back to some semblance of “normality” and being able to resume his passion at a grand scale. “I enjoy the fact that I get to put on live events for people to come and enjoy. I am always doing something different, my work is never boring, and it’s rewarding to put on large scale events knowing you have a part to play in it.”



How did he find his career, you might ask? As a full time student at nearby CSU Dominguez Hills, he worked at Dignity Health Sports Park part time, when the LA Chargers were based there, and started at the “bottom of the barrel.” “I started as a Guest Services Representative. It’s those people you see taking tickets, working in the aisles, answering questions. It’s the basic employees who are here on an event day. I was very interested in staying at the facility. My career just kept evolving from there.”

It wasn’t easy to earn his position but through networking, hard work, and education, he was selected for the job. “It’s very competitive and doesn’t happen overnight to find a spot in this line of work. When positions open up, you have hundreds if not thousands of people applying.” Whenever there was an event he worked at, he was intentional and strategic about creating relationships, meeting people, asking questions, expressing interest, and having conversations about their careers in order to stand out and get folks to understand that he wanted a career position with the organization. Giovanny is extremely qualified and well suited for his role. “I am one of the few who was able to go to school for this and landed a job in this (field). Now I get to do something I love.”

BSSCA CLASS OF 2017-2020

BY MIKE CARRERA

MCARRERA@BRIGHTSTARSCHOOLS.ORG

BSSCA ALUMNUS 2017
SANTA MONICA COLLEGE ALUMNUS 2021, AA
MAJOR: SOCIOLOGY

ALEXANDER ULARIO



Class of 2017 Alexander Ulario is now a Santa Monica College graduate with Honors and an Associate degree in Sociology. He contemplated transferring and was accepted to a few UC's and CSU's but has made the decision to join the family business. MBE Production Inc. a clothing production company that his father started a few years ago. It was a difficult decision that was lingering in Alexander's mind for months but he ultimately made the decision that he felt was best for him. Alexander has come a long way since his second semester at SMC where he ended up dropping a class he was failing and even considered dropping out of college entirely. It was a momentary setback but he's resilient and came back stronger and fiercer than ever

Things ultimately changed when he took a Sports Media class, he gained confidence and stop doubting his abilities. He later retook that class in the Winter session and got an A. I asked Alexander what advice he would give to students at the community colleges. "I think it is important to push yourself academically but know your limits. I know everyone wants to transfer right away but you also have to take care of your mental and physical health. Taking too many units can also affect your GPA and (your ability to be accepted into) the universities you apply to." While at SMC, Alexander was a part of the Soccer Club, Dream Program, EOPS, and the Scholars program. Participating in those clubs helped him stay engaged with his academics because of the community he created at Santa Monica. At the end of the day, Alexander's decision to not transfer might not be the traditional decision but he's taking advantage of the opportunity. "Opportunities come and go, sometimes you just need to believe in yourself, make decisions based on what you want and not what others think you should do. Simply take a leap of faith." Now that he has an Associate's, he can always change his mind in the future and decide to transfer to a CSU or UC.

VICTOR GUERRA

Victor Guerra is back in California, well... only for the moment. He just finished his first year at Kalamazoo College in Michigan. A current Mathematics major, he also plans to double major or minor in Physics. Victor moved to Kalamazoo in January and was one of few BSSCA alums who had the opportunity to live on campus last school year during the pandemic. Victor mentioned that there was an adjustment period when he first moved out. After spending the first semester at home where he dealt with no distraction, he needed to balance school, social life, and get acclimated to living on his own.

Victor mentioned that it took some trial and error but he was able to find a system that works for him. I asked Victor what advice he had for students who are thinking about going to school out of state. "They should do it. There are so many things to do outside of California. I had the opportunity to see snow and experience the different seasons, visit Chicago, East Lansing, and I'm only 2 hours away from Canada. Yes, it's scary at times and you are away from your family but you're not leaving forever and they're only a call away." At the moment, Victor is enjoying his summer with his family. He recently got two jobs on campus: a gym assistant and a campus tour guide. Who knows, we might visit Kalamazoo in a CEL and he just might be our tour guide. Only time could tell.

BSSCA ALUMNUS 2020
KALAMAZOO COLLEGE 2024
MAJOR: MATHEMATICS



RKHS CLASS OF 2020 & 2021

BY STEPHANIE CALDERON

SCALDERON@BRIGHTSTARSCHOOLS.ORG

DANNYELLA ALARCON

RKHS ALUMNA 2021
LOS ANGELES CITY COLLEGE
MAJOR: CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Dannyella is a recent alumni of RKHS and is so excited to be attending LACC in the Fall to pursue her degree for transfer in Child Development. Dannyella is ready to begin the next step of her future and has been taking the necessary steps to make sure she begins college with an amazing start. Learn more about Dannyella below!

What did you enjoy most about your time at RKHS?

I have enjoyed the support system and friends that I made during my years at RKHS. The teachers were always so helpful and I had a great experience learning from them.

What are you most excited about for college?

I am excited to become more independent and experience the college life. I am also excited to learn about a subject that I am passionate about and eventually transfer to a 4-year university to get my bachelors degree and teaching credential.

How did you become interested in Child Development?

I have always been interested in child development because I loved being in school and appreciated the work and care that my teachers and counselors gave me. I have enjoyed school and learned so much about myself because of the support I received that I want to give back by becoming a teacher as well. My ultimate goal is to become a special education teacher and help students who have disabilities succeed in school.



RAFFLE WINNER ~ YESENIA ROJAS RKHS CLASS OF 2020

Yesenia Rojas (class of 2020) is the winner of brand new headset. She has great communication with her ASCS coordinator (Ms. Calderon) and sent in her transcripts from last year to be entered into a raffle to win the headset. In addition to being the raffle winner she also earned a place on the CSULA Deans List for the second semester in a row earning a 3.8 GPA and above through her entire first year of college! Keep up the amazing work, Yesenia!

VAHS CLASS OF 2017-2020

BY KYLE PETRIE

KPETRIE@BRIGHTSTARSCHOOLS.ORG

CINDY OBREGON

**VAHS ALUMNA 2017
UC RIVERSIDE ALUMNA, JUNE 2021
MAJOR: POLITICAL SCIENCE,
CONCENTRATION ON INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**

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

A mindset I learned from Valor was grit; do not give up. Sometimes college and life are not easy, but if you stay driven and focus on your goals - you can make it. As a part of the founding middle and high school classes at Valor I was well prepared for the hard work that college requires.

What do you think Valor could have done to make you even *more successful* on your journey through college?

I wish I would have been more prepared for the heavy writing load that college requires. In high school I received an "A" in my AP English class, but even that wasn't enough to prepare me for the rigors of college writing. I had to take two basic writing classes when I got to UCR, but was eventually able to improve my writing ability as I went along.

What did you enjoy most about your experience at UCR?

I loved the people and relationships that I built. I also loved the campus environment; there's always something going on and so many clubs or activities that students can join. There were also concerts and other extracurricular activities that were fun to attend. UCR is also a very diverse campus, which I liked.

How did your world perspective change as a result of your time at UCR?

I learned that you need to have a balance between your academic and social life. Also, it's ok to pursue resources around mental health, as college brings a lot of stress. I also realized there were challenges; specifically institutional racism which I experienced first hand. Part of my own journey was learning that I am part of an indigenous group of people in Mexico called the Purepechas. The adversity I experienced helped me grow and teach me that we still have a long way to go.

What do you plan on doing in the future? Both next year and beyond.

I want to find a job related to being a research assistant, and eventually go back to school for my master's degree.

Is there any advice you'd like to give to current Valor staff or students?

I would advise everyone to lead with your head but follow your heart. Sometimes you think you know what you want to study, but your interests can change and that's alright. It's definitely a journey and you have to be ok with changing your mind and your interests!

RAFFLE WINNER ~ ASHLEY RODRIGUEZ '19

Ashley Rodriguez VAHS 2019 graduate is our 2021 alumni raffle winner. By staying in touch with Mr. Petrie and updating him with her most recent transcript and financial aid information, Ashley was eligible for this prize. She won a brand new pair of Jabra wireless headphones. Congrats Ashley - keep up the good work!

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.