



ALUMNI NEWS

BY DAVID SOLIS

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BSSCA & VAHS CLASS OF 2017-2022 CC & CTE PATHWAYS

LEONARDO MORENO

**BSSCA ALUMNUS CLASS OF 2019
GLENDALE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
MAJOR: EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNICIAN
CERTIFICATE**

Leonardo is a first-generation college student currently attending Glendale Community College. He is completing the Emergency Medical Technician program and is set to graduate this Spring 2022. After graduating from BSSCA, Leo faced a few obstacles that led him to question his college and degree choice along with facing some personal/family issues.

Unsure about his next steps after graduating from high school, Leo decided to attend a local community college where he explored their Electrical Engineering certificate program. After one semester he realized the program was not suitable for him and decided to reach out to ASCS staff for support. He learned about Glendale's EMT program after working with Mr. Carrera to identify another career of interest.



As Leo completed different program requirements, he learned new things about himself. He saw himself as an EMT professional who is passionate about providing assistance to people in need. Additionally, this new program gave his career a new meaning, "It is everything, a new lifestyle. I care more about people and helping out as much as I can. I feel blessed to have found what I want to do."

When asked about some of his key takeaways as a college student Leo mentioned the following: "It's a new experience working with professors. You have autonomy over your schedule, career/degree, you're able to choose what's best for you. The program allowed me to complete service hours in two circumstances; an ambulance ride-along and support at a local hospital. One recommendation for all students is to take that first step. **It's the small steps that get you to where you want to be.**"

BSSCA CLASS OF 2017-2022

URIEL PACHECO

BSSCA ALUMNUS 2018
SANTA MONICA COLLEGE TRANSFER STUDENT 2020
CSU, LONG BEACH ALUMNUS 2022
BACHELOR OF ARTS DEGREE: BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

How does your experience at Santa Monica College compare to your experience in CSULB?

I feel that the culture in Long Beach was more inviting and I felt welcome because the student had each other's back. For example, during the Covid pandemic, professors would create groups where we had to collaborate and complete assignments. When we finally went back to campus in person, I knew students in my majors. At SMC it was different because you would start the semester with a full class and end the semester with only half the students. It was easy to make bad habits because some students didn't prioritize school. Ultimately, it was important to take initiative and speak to my professors to get a better understanding of the material.

How did you transfer in 2 years?

I went to school year-round. I always took classes in the summer and winter sessions because I wanted to transfer in two years. That was my goal. I would also stay on campus to finish my assignments instead of going home. I knew that once I got home I wanted to relax and there were tons of distractions.

Why did you choose CSULB?

The main reason I choose Cal State Long Beach is that they gave me the best financial aid package. In high school, I was accepted to a few universities but I decided to attend SMC because it was the best financial decision.



Felicidades to Uriel,
CSULB Alumnus!!
Go Sharks!!



Uriel enjoying a much
earned vacation in
Cozumel, Cancun, Mexico

How did you balance working part-time while attending college full-time?

Honestly, it was hard and there were plenty of times I wanted to quit. I would usually be out of the house around 6 am and spend the day at school and go to work right after. When the pandemic started I was exhausted but it actually helped me out because I didn't have to commute to SMC anymore. In addition, I started working more hours at work because we got really busy after the pandemic.

Were you involved in any school activities?

No, I didn't have the time because of my job. I wanted to join a club but I couldn't fit them into my schedule. A little over a year ago I decided to take a supervisor position at my work to build up my resume.

What would you recommend for seniors who want to transfer from a community college?

I would tell them to stay on top of their assignments. College is different because there's no one pushing or reminding you to turn in your assignments. I learned that the hard way but it only took one time to figure that out.

VAHS CLASS OF 2017-2022

JOSIE GREDONIA

VAHS ALUMNA 2018
SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY ALUMNA 2022
MAJOR: KINESIOLOGY



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

It's important to take opportunities when they are given. Talk to as many people as you can: friends, professors, or coworkers. If you will be living on campus, try to become friends with your roommates. Typically they are also coming from a place outside of the area, so you might be each other's first friend! For class, talk to those around you and find people with the same interests as you. Anyone you meet may have something to give. Once you start taking major classes, you will see the same peers in your classes. So, try to make friends in those classes because they can provide opportunities for you.

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

I learned in college to not procrastinate and study better. In high school, what you learn in class is what you take a test on. However, in most college classes, what you're tested on comes from class, books, and articles your professor posts online. So, try to find your study methods that work for you to learn better in each class.

What have you enjoyed most about your experience being away from home and living on campus?

Something that I enjoyed about living on campus was the opportunity to learn how to live without my parents. I had to cook or buy my own food. I had to learn how to communicate with my roommates and share a space with them. I met people in my dorms and apartments that have helped me with classes and throughout the year. I liked being more independent and setting my own schedule.

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

My perspective changed when I met people outside of LA. At Valor, I only spoke to people at school and was able to relate to them on many things. However, going to college, I met people that came from across the country or the world who held different perspectives. It was a chance to speak about our views on different issues. I enjoyed learning how people were raised differently from me. I also enjoyed speaking about current events that were going on in the world.

What do you plan on doing with your degree in the future?

With a degree in Kinesiology, I plan on going into athletic training. I will need to get a masters degree in athletic training to become an athletic trainer. However, I will be taking a gap year to expand my experience in the field. This also gives me a chance to look into other opportunities and other areas of sports medicine.

Is there anything else that you would like to share with current students or staff members at Valor Academy High School?

Focus on yourself. You may have the same friends in high school throughout college, but do not be afraid to make new friends. The people in college all have the same goal in mind which is to get a college degree. This is a chance to meet new people, expand your network, and make your own decisions. Most of the people you're going to meet at college are coming from different parts of the world. Try to do what makes you happy and do not worry about other people. Each person is focusing on themselves to become better.

RKHS CLASS OF 2020-2021

HUIJE XUAN

**RKHS ALUMNUS 2020
SECOND YEAR
LOS ANGELES TRADE TECHNICAL COLLEGE
PROGRAM: CULINARY ARTS**



Huije is an alumnus from RKHS' founding class and is currently pursuing a Career Technical Education (CTE) program at Los Angeles Trade Technical College with a concentration in Culinary Arts. Huije was always fascinated by cooking and creating various dishes. During his time at RKHS, he was also part of the Culinary Club which laid a foundation for him to pursue his goal of becoming a chef. Now, he is one semester away from completing his program at LATTTC! Amazing work Huije!

How did your time at RKHS help prepare you for your culinary arts program?

RKHS was able to provide me space to learn academically but also be part of the Culinary Club. At LATTTC, I got to learn more about cooking and understand that I could have a career in it.

What are some of your career aspirations?

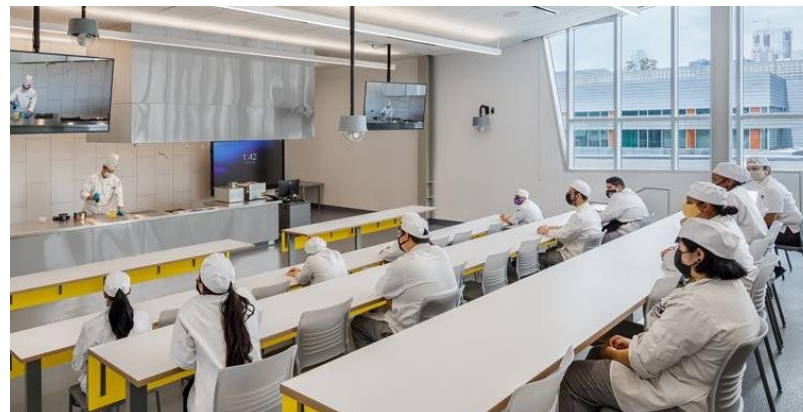
There's a lot of different things I can do and want to do once I am done with my program. Since I can learn about restaurant management, I might want to do that but one of the main goals of any chef is to be a Michelin Star chef and work at a Michelin restaurant.

What has been your most memorable experience so far in college?

I think the most memorable experience for me was when I was on campus and got to meet Chef Gordon Ramsey on campus! He was there to do some filming and teach a lecture, so I was able to see him, meet him and take a picture with him. I would have never imagined that he would come to my school and be interacting with us.

What are some major differences between high school and LATTTC?

EVERYTHING! During high school everything is focused on certain subjects but here I focus only on culinary arts. The classrooms and learning experiences are completely different because the kitchen is my classroom. Even the lecture halls where we learn techniques and skills are very different from a regular high school classroom. Everything here, we learn by actually doing it, and I love the hands-on aspect of my learning experience.



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 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. She 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
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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
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DAVID SOLIS

BA, CSU, NORTHRIDGE

David Solis is a graduate from California State University, Northridge where he majored in Chicana/o & Central American Studies. He is joining the ASCS team as the Community College & CTE Coordinator. He will focus on supporting students at BSSCA and VAHS who are interested in pursuing a post-secondary education at community college or earning a certificate/vocational degree. As a first-generation graduate he uses the power of 'storytelling' to share relatable experiences with his students to promote higher education as an option for growth. He has spent the last ten years supporting first-generation students through college access programs that focus on college & financial aid applications, community college experience, workforce development, and financial literacy. He believes education is one powerful tool, of many, that can shape and/or change our lives.

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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. He 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
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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. She 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
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