



# ALUMNI PORTRAITS OF PERSISTENCE

## Join the Career Accelerator Today!

### The Alumni Career Accelerator provides:

- Intensive, four week training on how to launch your job search.
- Coaching and feedback as you interview.
- Regular access to open job opportunities and paid apprenticeships.
- Personalized feedback on your career interests and transferable skills.

### This program is right for you if...

- You graduated from HS and are 18 years old or older
- You are not currently enrolled as a full-time student.
- You are looking for your first job or new role to help jumpstart your career.

### Program Details:

- 100% cost-free to admitted participants.
- Application for our next two cohorts (October and November) are now live!
- Live, virtual sessions will be held on Tuesday and Thursday evenings.
- After live training completes, you'll be paired 1-1 with a mentor who will provide additional support during your job search.
- Not ready to apply but want to be notified of future career support opportunities? Stay connected by filling out [this](#) short form.

### Application Process:

- Complete a short [application](#) so we understand your interest and motivations.
- Conduct a short interview with the pilot team.
- Questions? Email [bssccareersupport@brightstarschools.org](mailto:bssccareersupport@brightstarschools.org) or [book](#) a time to connect.

## SHCA CLASS OF 2018-2023

# JAZBETH AGUILAR

SHCA ALUMNA 2018  
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, MERCED ALUMNA, 2022  
MAJOR: COGNITIVE SCIENCE

Jazbeth has always had a love for learning that has helped her do well in school. Even when she was challenged, she knew she could count on the support of her professors. She loved to hear about their journeys and would often go to office hours to build that connection with her professors. She would ask what research they were working on and often times would volunteer to do research with her them, thus creating a community and a network all at the same time. *"Don't be scared to ask for help. Asking for help will show you many opportunities,"* says Jazbeth.

During her time at UC Merced, Jazbeth joined various student clubs and study groups, all of which became a part of her network too, and helped alleviate the homesickness that she was feeling. She felt homesick as her family was in LA and she was in Merced. She did not socialize much her first year, but during her second year, she learned to keep herself busy, continue going to study groups, and even creating her own study groups!

She used this time away from home, to do a bit of soul searching; she began meditating before class and before going to sleep and took walks around her campus. She knew being away from home was temporary and that she return soon. In the meantime, she took advantage of available resources: Merced has a shuttle that takes Merced residents to Yosemite for free! She would ensure she was the first to save a spot on the trip. Plus, students can ride the school shuttle and the city bus for free.



Her piece of advice to senior students is, *"Be ready to do a lot of soul searching. You will have many more freedoms than you're used to and you will learn how to grow with those freedoms."* In her journey of soul searching, she learned to be independent, to be more confident in herself, and to enjoy nature away from the city life. She admits, *"At first, when I visited Merced, I did not want to go and told myself I am NOT coming here, nothing was going on."* With time, she grew to love Merced and to enjoy all that the campus and small town had to offer.

In addition, she fell in love with her major too, learning about the brain and the mind. She explains the brain is easier to study and do research on as it is tangible and measurable. The different parts of the brain are labeled such as the prefrontal cortex, and temporal lobe, and you can measure brain cells too! On the other hand, the mind is not tangible, and cannot be measured. The mind is like Pandora's Box, an endless number of thoughts within thoughts and since it cannot be measured, the mind is made of theories and philosophy. Ultimately her long term goal is to pursue neuroscience and cognitive science to become a professor and teach about the brain. In the meantime, she wants to work with little kids at an elementary school and see how they develop over time.

She is thankful to Stella High, for the opportunities she had like traveling to Cambridge, UK as she roomed with a group of students who were from South Africa, France, and New York. Even today, they are still friends even after all these years! And the biggest lesson she took from that experience was, *"Take things for what they are, not from your expectations."*

Her advice to all students is, *"¡Echale ganas! Have faith in yourself and know that you are capable of anything. We are more resilient than we think. Remember to embody love and shine bright!"*



## VAHS CLASS OF 2018-2023

### DIANA ARREOLA

VAHS ALUMNUS 2023  
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE  
POSSIBLE MAJORS: THEATER OR BUSINESS



It's the first week of school! Which means Valor's graduating class of 2023 has arrived on their college campuses for their first full semester of college. That includes September's featured alumna Diana Arreola. In reality, Diana is already taking full advantage of her college experience as a member of the Extended Opportunity Program (EOP) at CSUN. This program is offered across all California public colleges and universities and was created with the goal of increasing graduation rates among first-generation students of color. Part of EOP's model is a summer transition (also known as Summer Bridge) program that each of its participants are required to attend. When asked about her experience this summer Diana said, "It was a big advantage to learn the campus and my transportation to and from school before the fall semester began. I also had the opportunity to meet new people and build a strong community with them." In addition to their summer programming, EOP combines expert college advising with an additional \$1,600 in grant funding for each academic year. Diana is very grateful for the opportunity that the university has afforded her.

Although it's only her first official week at college, Diana is already thinking about her future educational pathway. She's currently thinking that theater and possibly business administration could be good career paths going forward. In addition to these subjects, she said that she is really enjoying her Chicano Studies class that is a special section specifically designated for students who are part of EOP. As with everything, Diana says that getting to know other students *before* the academic year had begun has made her transition to CSUN much more manageable. One thing that she, and many other Valor alumni, noticed is how much bigger CSUN's campus is that she previously understood. She is very grateful to be on a campus with such strong supports for students of color. In fact, CSUN is the third-largest Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in the state of California; only Long Beach State and San Diego State have a higher LatinX population!

When asked about her experience at Valor Academy, Diana cites Social Justice as one of the classes that prepared her best for the academic rigors of college: "It got me in the habit of working hard, planning in advance, and helped me with essay writing which is such a big part of my college experience so far." Diana is already well aware of how different her college experience will be from that of Valor, so she advises the current seniors to cherish their final year in high school: "Enjoy your time in high school, because everything is different once you are in college. Be sure to manage your time wisely, that is a big part of being successful after high school. Be careful in choosing which colleges that you apply for, because success looks different for everyone...choose your own path!"



## RKHS CLASS OF 2020-2023

### UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO CAMPUS VISIT



Campus visits are a space to meet alumni for a one-on-one meeting and get to know you more personally in order to provide the support you need. Whether it is supporting you with your academics and/or social emotionally, with adjusting to college, or personal matters, we just want to see all of our alumni thrive and succeed. The ASCS team likes visiting different campuses because we get to see you in person and support you with any questions you have. As the new RKHS Alumni Support and College Success Coordinator, Kimberly Arteaga is still getting to meet a lot of Alums. Meeting Alumni at their campus is a way to also understand a little more of how you are feeling being on your college campus as a student.

During the month of April, RKHS ASCS Coordinator, Kimberly Arteaga was able to visit the University of California, San Diego for a campus visit. Did you know that Rise Kohyang High School has a total of 21 alumni currently attending UCSD from all classes 2020-2023? We are really proud of you all! The ASCS Coordinator was also able to host the first RKHS Social Gathering on campus and it was a lot of fun. Thank you to those who attended :) There was pizza, board games and lots of laughter. Some alumni also provided a piece of advice, "College is a once in a lifetime opportunity and a learning experience so make use of everything you can get. Don't be afraid to try new things and whenever you need help, there are many resources...." - Esther Song (2022).

Also, Aiden Ji (2022) shared that "it is good to consider community college if you didn't get in to your dream school because you can consider transferring." Just like both Esther and Aiden shared that there are options available to everyone, don't be afraid to ask for support and bring these conversations up during the one-on-one meetings. Whether you decide to go to a community college and then transfer or go straight into a 4 year University, know that the ASCS team is here to support you with your goals.



# 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 2018-2022, we will be there to help you navigate, thrive, and succeed in graduating from higher education.



### 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  
SUPPORTING CLASS OF 2018-2023  
KPETRIE@BRIGHTSTARSCHOOLS.ORG



### KIMBERLY ARTEAGA

BA, UC SAN DIEGO

Kimberly Arteaga received her B.A. in Human Development and minor in Chicana/o studies from UC San Diego. She was born and raised in LA and the first one in her family to go to college and graduate. She has been supporting students in higher education, college access and retention programs for over 7 years. Part of her passion for working with students comes from her own-lived experiences. Through her multiple roles she has supported and guided high school and college students attaining a higher education and beyond. She has also worked with community members and parents in supporting students achieving their hopes and dreams. Kimberly is excited to continue working with students in her current role as the RKHS Alumni Support and College Success Coordinator.

RKHS ASCS COORDINATOR  
SUPPORTING CLASS OF 2020-2023  
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We are in the process of hiring an additional ASCS Coordinator who will support our SHCA and VAHS alumni at the community college. More details to follow...



### ELIZABETH ROJAS

BA, COLLEGE OF SAINT BENEDICT AND SAINT JOHN'S UNIVERSITY

Originally born and raised in South Central Los Angeles, Elizabeth, a first-generation college graduate obtained her bachelor's degree in Hispanic Studies and Communications from the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University in St. Joseph, Minnesota. She also studied abroad in Guatemala where she was able to connect to her roots through food and poetry. Elizabeth has served as a college coach, mentor, and college counselor at public and parochial schools in Minnesota, working with first-generation and low-income college students. She is thankful and grateful for the countless mentors she had along her journey. She looks to pay it forward to under-resourced and historically excluded communities, to ensure they have access to information, resources, and higher education.

SHCA ASCS COORDINATOR  
SUPPORTING CLASS OF 2018-2023  
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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  
SUPPORTING ALL CLASSES WITH GRADUATE SCHOOL  
APPLICATION PROCESS  
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