

# ALUMNI NEWS

## SHCA CLASS OF 2018-2022 COMMUNITY COLLEGE & CTE

BY DOMINIQUE ROMERO

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### JHOSET ROJO CANELA

SHCA ALUMNUS, 2021  
LOS ANGELES SOUTHWEST COLLEGE ALUMNUS, 2023  
MAJOR: COMMUNICATIONS



Jhoset Rojo Canela was born in Guadalajara, Jalisco Mexico. At the age of 17, Jhoset and his family decided to move to Los Angeles, CA to embark on a new journey in hopes of pursuing a better life. During his studies at Stella High Charter Academy he worked hard to learn English and adapt to the American culture. During 11th grade Jhoset started to ask himself what he wanted to pursue as a career after high school. He remembered having taken a theater class back when he was a child in Mexico that gave him much joy. That theater class sparked an interest in acting. He had then decided that acting was his dream career and that he would pursue acting after graduating from high school.

He decided to attend Los Angeles Southwest College as it was convenient for him to continue his studies near his home. He began to work towards his Associate's degree in Communication Studies. He will be graduating this spring 2023 semester. Jhoset has enjoyed his academic studies at LASC and has had a very positive experience: "The professors have been helpful. When I have questions, they are willing to answer me and provide feedback."

Currently Jhoset is part of Quetzal Productions in Mexico City, where he is continuing to work towards gaining experience and working towards earning castings. He is also in the process of sending his portfolio to AW castings in Los Angeles. His dream is to land a role in a series!



His advice to students who are interested in pursuing acting is to **NOT GIVE UP!** Create Instagram profiles with good pictures, use hashtags targeting the casting agencies, send direct messages to casting agencies via social media. "Acting is a tough career and can take a toll on your mental health" Jhoset copes with the pressure by insisting to always have a mindset of not giving up, being determined, and simply to persevere.

After he graduates from LASC, he plans to attend Los Angeles Film school or New York Academy to continue to learn more about the acting career!

BY MIKE CARRERA

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## SHCA CLASS OF 2018-2022

### NORMA GARCIA

SHCA ALUMNA 2020  
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY  
MAJOR: BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

Norma Garcia, Class of 2020, has not let the pandemic stop her from her dreams and aspirations. Even though the pandemic canceled all in-person senior activities, she embarked on her college journey in the Fall of 2020 at UC Berkeley. It wasn't a typical first year because the campus had very few students. Most students that year decided to stay home for numerous reasons, but Norma did not.

A current Business Administration major at the Haas School of Business, Norma wants to work in the marketing field where she can be a resource for students from multicultural communities. A first generation college student and proud Oaxacan, Norma has continued to stay active and has made her presence felt in Berkeley. Norma has participated in multiple school-based clubs, 10 at last count! Highlighting just a few, she is the current VP of Internal Affairs the Latinx Business Student Association (LBSA) and is the Communications Intern for the Chicanx Latinx Student Development (CLSD) Office. These two particular school-based organizations have allowed Norma to mentor other students as well as granting her access to extensive networking and professional development opportunities. In addition, Norma has not only been involved in school clubs but has also had other jobs and internships. She was involved in Changeist, interned at a Venture Capital Fund, and worked for the Cal Alumni Association. This summer she will join Adobe as a Marketing and Communications Intern at their San Francisco office. I asked Norma how she has been able to get these internships during the pandemic where other alums have been struggling. "Networking! I used to miss many opportunities because I didn't step out of my comfort zone and take initiative. I knew that in picking a college, I wanted to challenge myself and get out of this comfort zone. Today, I make sure to take advantage of every opportunity that presents itself. And lastly, being proactive and asking for help has allowed me to encounter many more opportunities."



Currently, seniors at Stella, Valor, and Rise are making their college decision. Some students will decide to stay close to home and others will leave their nest. I asked Norma how she made that decision and how her parents supported her choice. "I wouldn't say my parents were against it but they definitely wanted me to stay close to home. I could've gone to UCLA and commuted but I wanted to challenge myself and have the full experience of moving away from home. Yes, I knew things were going to be difficult because I was hours away from home, but I got so much independence from it. I participate in school events, hold leadership roles, and have access to networks in SF and Silicon Valley. I would definitely encourage seniors to take that leap."

It hasn't been a long time since Norma graduated from high school but she's hit the ground running. Giving back has always been one of her core values. She's supported BSSCA students in the past and is working with Mr. Nash to support SHCA in the present. The future is bright for Norma, I'm looking forward to seeing what she does next.

**Berkeley**  
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

## VAHS CLASS OF 2017 - 2022

### VALERIE PLEITEZ

VAHS ALUMNA 2017  
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE  
MAJOR: EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION  
PROJECTED GRADUATION: MAY 2024



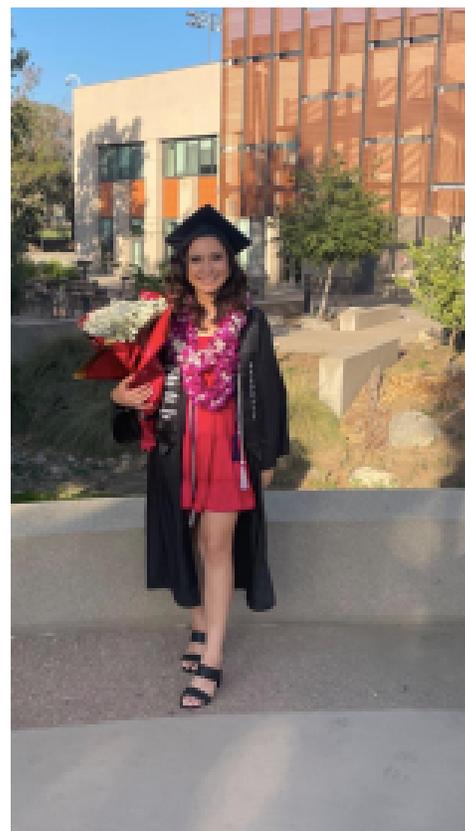
A native of Panorama City and an alumna of both Valor Academy Middle and High Schools; Valerie has been a "proud Valor Lion" for over 10 years. She began her journey at Valor Middle in the 7th grade - all the way back in 2011 - as a member of its founding class. Valerie was raised by her parents in the San Fernando valley and is the youngest of three siblings. She says that, "My childhood was great! I always received lots of love and support."

If there is one word that defines Valerie it would definitely be determination. She began her journey in higher education at San Francisco State University (SFSU) during the fall of 2017. However, adjusting to her new environment proved challenging, and although Valerie enjoyed her time away, she elected to move back to the San Fernando Valley and resume her students at Los Angeles Mission College (LAMC) for the 2018-19 school year. In her words: "Coming back to LAMC was a huge transformation for me because it felt like I was starting school from the beginning. I quickly reminded myself that being back home meant enjoying the beautiful Southern California weather, mom's cooking, and being back with family." After spending a few semesters at LAMC Valerie decided that she would pursue an Associate's Degree for Transfer (ADT) with a goal of attending California State University Northridge (CSUN) beginning her junior year.

With a lot of hard work and determination, by the fall of 2022 Valerie had completed her ADT and was ready to enroll at CSUN. She said that although at first it seemed like it was going to be a daunting task, that transferring was not very difficult in the end. She said that the courses transfer easily and that with the aid of assist.org and some guidance, she was able to navigate the process smoothly. She does, however, offer the following piece of advice, **"Finding your college advisor as soon as you begin school is a MUST! Keeping track of your progress report throughout each semester is also very important."**

Valerie is a Child Development major with an emphasis on Early Childhood Education. Her long-term goal is to work in a school setting; preferably with students in either kindergarten or first grade. At her current pace, she will likely be graduating with her Bachelor's degree in either December of 2023 or May of 2024. Valerie is unique in another way: she is one of just two alumni in the history of Valor Academy to return to our campus as a full-time staff member. In addition to being enrolled full-time at CSUN, she currently works as an Instructional Aid (I.A.) at the high school campus. She said that the staff has been extremely welcoming and notes how exciting it is that the current principal, Ms. Anaya Sanchez, was a teacher of hers many years ago!

Valerie credits the Alumni Support (ASCS) team with helping her achieve her long-term goals: "Mr. Petrie has been an amazing alumni support system. He is always willing to take time out of his day to answer any questions or concerns that I have about school. Having Ms. Cortes send out monthly newsletters with useful information and updates is also very convenient."



## RKHS CLASS OF 2020-2022

# JESSICA FIGUEROA

**RKHS ALUMNA 2022**  
**UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, RIVERSIDE**  
**MAJOR: UNDECLARED**

Starting college can be an exciting new journey. However, a journey is not always linear and there can be bumps along the way. It can be challenging to adapt to a new environment away from home. Jessica Figueroa, is a Freshman at UC Riverside and a proud alumna of Rise Kohyang High School, class of 2022. She has been a very resilient student going through personal challenges and overcoming them like a champion. RKHS has helped her shape into the determined person she is today. While at RKHS, she was able to learn so much about time management, commitment, having a strong mindset, and being strong in body and mind. These skills have translated in college to keep pushing and striving to do what is right even when it can be challenging.



In the time she has been in college, she has been able to learn and reflect on her time as a student. "It's ok to take a break, not everything is about studying, don't stress too much." Jessica has been able to find a home away from home through getting involved on campus by playing intramural sports.

Her perspective has grown so much in the past couple of months while at UCR. She has a lot more independence and that has allowed her to plan her own schedule, manage her time, and balance her school work and social life. She mentioned, "My time in college has definitely made me a more open minded person than what I already am. At the end of the day everyone grows as a person when heading to college. College is more than just academics, it gives each student an opportunity to explore their interests and have a better understanding of yourself and the world around you which I have definitely seen in myself.". She has been able to explore the resources offered to her and recommends everyone to take advantage of the services and activities on campus. One of her favorite places on campus besides the Rec Center has been the Orchid library. Not only is she able to study there but has also attended fun events where she has been able to do canvas painting, play board games and other arts and crafts to help her destress.



Jessica loves playing sports and staying active. During high school, she played cross country, basketball and flag football. She wanted to continue to do something she enjoyed and that is to play sports while in college. She spends most of her time at the Student Recreation Center, where she has made most of her friends. During her time at UCR, she has played basketball and soccer Co-ed Intramural sports. She plans to continue playing during the spring semester as it is a way to connect and meet new people that have the same interest as her.

An important piece of advice that Jessica would like to share with everyone is to advocate for yourself. Whether that is asking for an extension from your professor, seeking help, or communicating your needs. At the end of the day, we all go through our own challenges.



# 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.



## 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 SHCA Alums in navigating higher education and in contributing to students' success in college and career.

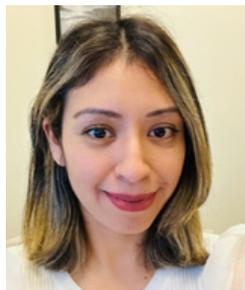
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## DOMINIQUE ROMERO

**BA, PACIFIC OAKS COLLEGE  
M.ED., UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA**

Dominique Romero is the new ASCS community college & CTE Coordinator for SHCA. She was born and raised in LA! and identifies as a first-generation transfer student. She received an Associate's degree in Liberal Arts from Rio Hondo College, then transferred to earn a Bachelor's degree in Human Development from Pacific Oaks College. A few years later she decided to return to school and earned a Master's degree in Educational Counseling from USC! Dominique has over 5 years of experience working in the community college setting. She has worked in various roles that allowed her to support former and current foster youth, first-generation, low SES students in their overall academic journeys. She has over 3 years of experience working as a counselor for various community colleges near the Los Angeles area. Her passion is helping students navigate college and their careers! She loves to inspire, motivate and support students to reach their full potential. She is excited to join the ASCS team and is happy to be able to serve the Bright Stars Schools alumni.

**SHCA & VAHS ACSC COLLEGE & CTE COORDINATOR  
SUPPORTING CLASS OF 2018-2022  
DROMERO@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. 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 ACSC COORDINATOR  
SUPPORTING CLASS OF 2018-2022  
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## 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 ACSC COORDINATOR  
SUPPORTING CLASS OF 2020-2022  
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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.

**ACSC DIRECTOR  
SUPPORTING ALL CLASSES WITH GRADUATE SCHOOL  
& CAREER COACHING  
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