



ALUMNI NEWS

BY MIKE CARRERA

MCARRERA@BRIGHTSTARSCHOOLS.ORG

BSSCA CLASS OF 2017-2021

ESTEFANIA RODRIGUEZ

BSSCA ALUMNA 2017
CSUN, NORTHRIDGE: GRADUATED DECEMBER 2021
MAJOR: POLITICAL SCIENCE



What did you enjoy most about your time at CSUN?

I enjoyed the fact that I had the privilege to live on campus. I knew that CSUN was a commuter school but I wanted to take advantage of all the resources on campus. It's a smaller school and since I lived in the valley I was able to take advantage of school activities and meet different people. I also have friends that commuted and they went straight to school and drove back home right after their classes.

What is something different you wish you could've done differently your first year at CSUN?

My class schedule. I started at 8 am every day and that wasn't a pleasant experience. I was used to my BSSCA schedule and I assumed that I would be okay but I learned quickly that I don't enjoy early classes. I also got all my classes back to back and I didn't give myself any time for breaks. The great thing about college is that you can set up your schedule the way you want it.

Were you involved in any school-based organizations?

Yes, I joined a sorority. I was also a University Ambassador Campus Tour Guide. I was also part of the Pre-Law Association.

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

It completely changed. I was forced to become more independent and disciplined. The workload at CSUN was more demanding and if I didn't change something, I was going to fail some of my classes.

Were your parents okay with you living on campus?

No, they wanted me to stay home and commute to school. I come from a very traditional Mexican family and I'm also the oldest. It took some time for them to accept it but once they did they were supportive. I highly recommend living on campus if you receive a good financial aid package or you can afford it.

What advice would you give students who are considering living on campus?

Do it. Your parents will be okay if you live on campus. It's also a great experience and you can also take advantage of all the resources on campus. Plus, it's easier to make friends that way. School becomes a second home.

What's one piece of advice you would give students?

Network! It's important to talk to people on campus. It's also a great way to get involved in campus activities.

What are your major/minors and what do you plan on doing with your degree in the future, or maybe some things that you are already doing with them?

I graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science with an emphasis on State and Government. I plan to start my Paralegal Certification program in March at UCLA. I want to get some experience in the field and if I like it, I'll apply for Law School. In the meanwhile, I got a job offer at Valor High where I'll be an instructional aide for the rest of the 21-22 school year.

VAHS CLASS OF 2017-2021

BY KYLE PETRIE

KPETRIE@BRIGHTSTARSCHOOLS.ORG

CLAUDIA CHAVEZ

VAHS ALUMNA 2018
CSU, NORTHRIDGE: EXPECTED GRAD MAY 2022
MAJOR: CHILD & ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT

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

Having a strong work ethic, oral/ written communication skills, time management, and organization! Moreover, the mindset that I learned from Valor has been "hard work pays off." You have to push twice as hard, because if you do not push through, you will take longer to achieve your goals. Don't procrastinate! I also think that the many positives skills I developed at Valor has really helped me in my 4 years of college.

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

During high school, most days were the same routine: going to class, getting lunch, getting breaks, doing homework, etc. etc. Although in high school I was similar to the student who I currently am in terms of timeliness, something I would advise students to help better prepare for life after high school would be pushing yourself to turn in all assignments on time. In "real life," most people will not permit late submissions.

What did you enjoy most about your four years at CSUN?

What I will always cherish from CSUN are the connections I have gained. Not only that, but also the amount of resources that are given to students when we are in need of help; that could be mentally, emotionally, and physically. Seeing how important students are to the CSUN staff, especially right now during this pandemic.

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

My perspective of the *world* has evolved throughout my time in college. I have been able to develop as a young Latina/Hispanic independent woman. I have had the opportunity to explore my surroundings, find myself as a person, and find my passion. Not only the time in college has changed my perspective of the outside world, but I have also been able to connect with my family more and actually see how it is to be an independent woman; taking their advice and listening to their experiences.

What are your major/minors and what do you plan on doing with your degree in the future, or maybe some things that you are *already* doing with them?

I am looking forward to becoming a preschool teacher and hopefully soon I will have my own business. My business will be based on creating "learning binders" for low income students. I want to be the person, teacher, and educator who makes an impact in my students' lives. I want to come to class and hear my students say that Ms. Chavez is the reason have found a love for education!

Any other words of wisdom for current Valor students?

Do not be afraid; if you have a goal that you want to accomplish go out and do it! No matter how scary it may seem, testing your limits can be a life-changer. Even if you don't "succeed" you will learn a lesson from putting your energy and effort into it. All of the best things that I have accomplished have come when I put my fears behind me.

SILAS MAZARIEGOS

RKHS CLASS OF 2021

RKHS ALUMNUS CLASS OF 2021
SANTA MONICA COLLEGE
MAJOR: ART

Silas is a current first year student at SMC studying Art. He loves all types of art including digital media, studio art, film, photography, and ceramics. He loves to be creative and feels that art allows him to fully express his creativity. Right now, he is exploring all the different types of art classes that SMC has to offer in order to help him discover what type of career he wants to pursue in the field of art. Silas is making the most out of his time at SMC and definitely looks forward to taking classes at his own pace in order to do his best. Here is a little more about Silas' experience at SMC thus far.

What is your major or area of interest?

I am extremely interested in art, but still not sure specifically what area or type of art because there are so many options.

How do your college classes differ from high school?

The classes in college are definitely more fast paced and difficult than they were in high school. A lot of things you have to figure out on your own. Some of the classes are also much longer since you only meet once or twice a week instead of everyday like in high school.

What are some skills you've learned or developed as a college student?

I definitely learned to advocate for myself more in my classes. For example, if I do not understand something I ask for clarification. Definitely don't be afraid to ask for help.

What is something you are looking forward to this year?

I am looking forward to improving my skills as a student by working on my study skills and becoming more engaged in the material I am learning about. Since I really enjoy my art classes. I'm looking forward to learning different types of art and asking more questions in class.

What is some advice you would share with students in high school?

I think one of the biggest pieces of advice I can share with high school students is to not wait to the last minute to do things. In college there are real consequences for not doing things on time like being dropped from a class, I would also say that you don't need to be afraid to ask for help. There's so many people out there who can help you.



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.

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
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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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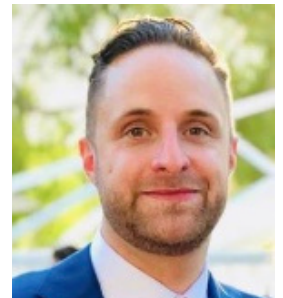
KYLE PETRIE

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 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.

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**

