



ALUMNI NEWS

ALUMNI SUPPORT & COLLEGE SUCCESS PROGRAM

BY GENOVEVA CORTES

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BSSCA CLASS OF 2015 & 2016

WILLIAM FOY

BSSCA ALUMNUS 2016
UCLA ALUMNUS 2020
MAJOR: POLITICAL SCIENCE



UCLA GRADUATE
WILLIAM FOY
NEXT TO THE UCLA MASCOT,
THE BRUIN!

This hardworking and ambitious Bruin graduated at the end of Spring 2020 with his degree in Political Science. William moved to the Lake View neighborhood of Chicago, Illinois over the summer of 2020 as he prepared for his first year in graduate school at Northwestern University Pritzker School of Law. He had been accepted to U. of Virginia Law School, Vanderbilt, George Washington Law School, and Boston College Law School but chose Northwestern because he applied "Early Decision" and they provided the best financial aid. He credits his experience of working 13 hours a week, as an UCLA cashier, while maintaining a 3.6 GPA, and enrolling in an average of 17 units a quarter to his great time management skills and his ability to write well and quickly: important skills that will help him succeed in law school. As of now, he is interested in focusing on Labor or Employment law.

BSSCA ALUMNAE 2016
WILLIAMS COLLEGE ALUMNA 2020
MAJOR: CHEMISTRY AND ASIAN STUDIES

LESLY MEJIA

Leaving her family in Los Angeles for Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts was no easy feat for Lesly, but her determination and resilience paid off this past Spring 2020 as she earned dual degrees from the elite private liberal arts college. Who knew that her bumpy transition to living on the East coast would result in her launching her career near Boston as she interviews for research positions with well known pharmaceutical companies. During her first semester at Williams, she felt alone as she immediately noticed the lack of Latinos at the college. In addition, there was no local Latino community in the neighborhood of Williamsburg, about a 3 hour drive west of Boston and a few hours from the Vermont and New York borders. It took over a year to find her friend group, but she eventually found them in the Chemistry Department. "It's ok to be scared and nervous but keep exploring your campus until you find your community. There are many different people who you will and will not get along with. Oftentimes the friends you start with aren't the ones you end up with, and that's all okay."

Lesly plans on going to graduate school to earn her Master's or Ph.D in several years but wants to gain experience as a chemist first. "The laboratory experience you get in your classes isn't enough. I sadly waited until my Senior year to start doing research. If you are thinking of majoring in STEM or conducting any kind of research, talk with your professors as early as you can" to start learning about opportunities and fields of study because "it will help you in finding your future major or job." For those of you considering going to graduate school like Lesly, make sure your cumulative GPA, when you graduate, is well above a 3.0 because if you finish with anything less, it will be challenging to get accepted into many programs, no matter the subject. In addition, employers will want to see your transcripts so keep those grades up!



WILLIAMS COLLEGE GRADUATE
LESLIE MEJIA ENJOYING THE FALL
SEASON IN MASSACHUSETTS

BSSCA CLASS OF 2017-2020

BY MIKE CARRERA

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LALAH DUNHAM NICHOLSON

BSSCA ALUMNAE 2017
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, DAVIS, EXPECTED GRAD 2022
MAJOR: PSYCHOLOGY & AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES

Lalah Dunham Nicholson is thriving at the University of California Davis. After taking a gap year to work and explore colleges after graduation from BSSCA, she hit the ground running making the Dean's List her first two years at UCD. As a BSSCA senior, Lalah did not get accepted to the universities she was hoping for and was faced with a dilemma: to either take a year off and reapply the following year or take the community college transfer route. She made the difficult choice to take a year off and strategically submitted her application for the following year after she carefully researched universities and impacted majors. In 2018, Lalah was accepted to the University of California, Davis as an African American Studies major. After one year of hard work, she was also able to declare as a Psychology major and is now on track to double major. She is especially proud to have gotten accepted into the Psychology major after she had been initially denied admissions in 2017.



In the last two years, Lalah has embraced UC Davis and has become involved in the Black Student Union. She currently works as a Peer Advisor for the Psychology department. She enjoys participating in BSU events and loves being around like-minded individuals who share similar ideologies and are passionate about creating equity for all students. As a Peer Advisor, she's able to help UCD students navigate their way through college and recommend which classes they should take: a skill she acquired throughout her first year at UCD. Since she didn't have access to the psychology department, she had to conduct her own research and find the appropriate classes she needed to double major.

Once she graduates in 2022, she plans to come home to Los Angeles and apply for graduate school at USC, CSULB, CSUF, and CSUN. She will pursue her Master's degree in Marriage and Family Therapy. As an African American woman, she knows there's a lack of representation in the mental healthcare field and hopes to be a role model to her community. It won't be long before we see the acronym LMFT, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, behind Lalah's name!

Lalah's Tips

"Before applying make sure to do your own due diligence on schools and know which majors are most impacted and which are not."

"It's important to have a balance. Yes, school is your priority but it's also important to meet people and enjoy being a college student."

"Don't be scared to ask for help. There are tons of resources available for students."

RKHS CLASS OF 2020

BY STEPHANIE CALDERON

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ANTHONY SANCHEZ- RKHS CLASS OF 2020

SANTA MONICA COLLEGE

MAJOR: BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Anthony is one of the founding graduates of Rise Kohyang High School and has always had a passion for business and entrepreneurship. After graduating from RKHS, Anthony has kept himself busy by going after his dreams in an OUTSTANDING way. Anthony started school at Santa Monica College this fall where he hopes to learn more about business and transfer to a four year. He has already started his own company and hopes to use his education to help grow his business into a bigger brand with an amazing message.



Anthony's company is a clothing brand that was made to give people inspiration and to be unique: to make the world a better place, to do something unthinkable--to be OUTSTANDING. Not only do they provide a powerful message, they also provide the best quality and detail in every single item you purchase. The goal is to share a story in every product that is released and also give customers the best service to make sure they are happy. He hopes that the message to be "OutStanding" gives customers that inspiration to chase their dreams and achieve them. WE ARE OUTSTANDING!! The ultimate call is to inspire everyone to be the best version of themselves everyday. If you are interested in supporting Anthony's business please see his shop at the link below!

<https://outstandingco.myshopify.com/>

BRIGHT STAR SCHOOLS ALUMNI SUPPORT & COLLEGE SUCCESS TEAM

All Bright Star Schools Alumni and Alumnae, 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. If you have paused your education or want to get started in a program tailored to your goals and circumstances, please reach out to us so we can help you before your membership in the program expires.

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 their college and career aspirations.

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.