

In June of 2021, I am expected to receive a Bachelor of Arts in English with a minor in Political Science from the University of California, Riverside. I am in the final stage of submitting my law school applications, and I hope to pursue my Junior Doctorate at the University of California, Irvine School of Law in the fall of 2021. As an undocumented, first-generation Latina, I am well aware of the flaws in our legal system that tends to punish those who don't have the necessary resources to climb out of poverty. Hence, I plan to use my privilege as an educated individual to pursue a career in immigration and criminal defense law in order to become a public defender. Additionally, I am also a low-income student who has worked part-time for the last four years of my undergraduate course while attending UCR full-time. As a DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) recipient, I understand how difficult it is to navigate the world of academia with limited resources. Therefore, one of my long-term personal goals is to set up a scholarship fund for undocumented students in California.

I was always taught that nothing would ever be handed to me. These values were deeply ingrained into me by my immigrant parents, who never complained about the jobs they worked, jobs that exploited their cheap labor so our family of five could reside in a one-bedroom apartment. Because of these values, I learned to normalize the obstacles that I've had to overcome at a large public university. This perspective has shifted as I've navigated my leadership experiences at the UC, Riverside. I've come to realize that university is meant to be a space where students can achieve their academic and social potential as they learn to hatch from their eggs. In this space, the university should provide the necessary tools to reach their potential, but unfortunately, these resources aren't always available or easily accessible. Our campus prides itself on being one of the most diverse campuses belonging to the UC system, serving over 25,000 students and ranking number one in the country for social mobility in the U.S. News &

World Report Best Colleges rankings. Yet, UCR is the campus that receives the least amount of funding than the other UC's.

Hence, it is up to student leaders, such as myself, to advocate for the needs of the students that represent our diverse campus community. Thus, I ran and was elected as a student representative under the UCR student government body. As I progress through my career goals, I would also like to start an organization to advocate for tuition-free community colleges and universities. UC, Riverside has allowed me to connect with fellow peers and mentors who have changed the course of my life for the better. Therefore, I believe everyone should have a right to a fair and legal representation and the opportunity to pursue higher education regardless of their socioeconomic background and status.