



Senior Spotlight FROM VISION TO VICTORY



CELEBRATING THE JOURNEY OF VISION GRADUATES – CLASS OF 2025



VALERIA ARTEAGA

Since childhood, Valeria has been part of VISION Young Leaders' Academy, and now after years of growth, determination, and hard work, she's graduating high school and heading to UCLA to study Biochemistry.

Her story is one of resilience, community, and a drive to succeed.

"The community at VISION created a growth mindset in me since I was little," she shared. "The teachers involved with the program were really supportive of me and my goals—they always pushed me to be better."

Over the years, VISION Young Leaders' Academy provided Valeria with not only mentorship and support, but also opportunities to grow as a student and a leader.

"The book clubs motivated me to read but also articulate the thoughts I wanted to express, helping me later on in my academics,"

she said. "VISION pushed me to be who I am today, believing in me even when I didn't believe in myself."

That foundation helped Valeria make wise decisions, stay grounded, and embrace her role in giving back.

"The mentorship they provided helped guide me into making good choices both academically and morally, but also helped me see how I can be more involved. It helped me realize the importance of community and helping others. They were my support system throughout elementary, middle, and high school, which are the most important years in shaping who one is as an individual."

As a first-generation college-bound student, her success came from hard work and from the people who lifted her up along the way.

"I believe my academic success stemmed from having that push. Especially as a first-generation student, this was all new to my family. The support, love, and guidance was where I fell back on in times where I was lost."

Valeria stayed focused from day one of high school, knowing that education was the key to her future.

"Going into high school, I knew it was going to be hard, but my mom instilled in me the importance of education—it is what creates the path to your future college. I made sure to take rigorous courses and push myself to do my best."

Despite the pressure, she found time to enjoy the high school experience, creating memories that helped her through challenging moments.

"My favorite moments were the dances and hangouts with my friends. It would give me an escape from studying, to have fun and enjoy the moments we have right now in our youth. I strongly recommend going to those sports

games, the rivalry games, the dances. It is what kept me sane given the workload I put on myself, but also were the moments I still cherish in my heart looking back.”

She’s honest about the struggles too—especially learning how to manage stress and relationships while staying on top of her goals.

“I would say I was never much of a procrastinator—I would do my work whenever it was given to me, but that did add quite a bit of stress. I was never the best at creating balance, but it did get easier as time went on. I did lose friends along the way, but I learned to accept that people grow.”

Valeria’s academic journey speaks for itself: taking 9 honors classes, 7 APs, a dual enrollment course, and even summer classes to stay ahead. She also gained experience through extracurriculars and leadership roles, including serving as President of the Green Valley Project Youth Council, participating in CODE Academy, and volunteering with local initiatives like Meet Up, Clean Up.

When it came time to apply for college, her transcript, extracurriculars, work experience, and carefully revised PIQs helped her stand out. With a 4.58 GPA, 145+ hours of community service, she was accepted to UC Irvine, UC Davis, UC Santa Barbara, UC Los Angeles, UC Berkeley, Cal Poly SLO, CSU Long Beach, CSU Channel Islands, and CSU Bakersfield.

Her choice? UCLA. Major: Biochemistry.

As she closes this chapter, Valeria leaves some powerful advice for those following in her footsteps:

“Don’t be afraid to outgrow situations and friendships. High school is a journey of growth which prepares you for college. Don’t stress it and try making things work—if it’s meant to be, it will be. Work on yourself and always try to be a better version of you. Strive to be the person you want. Don’t limit yourself—anything can happen. Don’t slack off your freshman year and start working towards your goals.”



NELLY LOPEZ

For the last 6 years, Nelly has been inspired by VISION Young Leaders’ Academy to reach higher and now, with determination, resilience, and purpose, she’s graduating and heading to UC Irvine to major in Criminology & Law.

“VISION really influenced me to seek out higher education! It motivated me to keep working towards getting into a good university.”

Nelly’s high school experience wasn’t without challenges, but she reflects on it with positivity and pride.

“I really enjoyed high school! It had its ups and downs at times—classes got hard, and I struggled with my mental health—but overall, it was a great experience!”

Outside the classroom, Nelly dedicated herself to leadership, service, and creative passions. She participated in CAUSE, joined the Culinary Academy, competed in multiple cooking competitions including CCAP, and was involved in CODE Academy and HOBY.

Nelly’s academic record was just as strong, with a 4.4 GPA. That hard work paid off and she was accepted to UC Irvine, UC Santa Barbara, UC Davis, UC Merced, CSU Long Beach, Cal Poly Pomona, and CSU Northridge. She’s now proudly committed to UC Irvine, where she’ll major in Criminology & Law.

As she looks back on her journey, Nelly offers advice for future students:

“Try to get involved in your community and start passion projects—it really helps shape your application and shows your commitment to an activity! And focus on your grades! Don’t worry—high school will be fun if you work hard and relax at times!”



KELLY FLORES

For Kelly, high school was a journey of growth, discovery, and connection. Early on, her involvement in community service and the support of caring mentors helped shape her perspective.

"Being around coordinators like Ms. Hatchman, Mrs. Seiler, and Mrs. Johnson made me feel comfortable and inspired me to become the best version of myself," she shares. "That process opened my eyes to the impact one person can have on themselves and to their environment."

Reflecting on the past four years, Kelly describes a path filled with both challenges and triumphs.

"It was a struggle to adjust to high school my first year, but I didn't let fear define me," she says. It wasn't until senior year that things truly came together. "That's when I discovered my identity and became outgoing and organized."

Like many students, she juggled school with work and difficult coursework, but time management helped her succeed.

"Being involved in school is what made most of my experience memorable," she emphasizes. Whether it was attending football games or dancing at school events, Kelly immersed herself fully in the PHS community. "Feeling like part of the PHS community made the school championships and accomplishments feel as if they were mine too." She adds, "I love my high school experience and wouldn't change a single thing about it."

Academically, Kelly stood out thanks to her drive, consistency, and deep involvement. She maintained an impressive 4.47 GPA, enrolled in Honors and AP courses, and actively participated in clubs including CSF, Key Club, French Club, and Nature Club. She held leadership roles, served in ASB, and was a cabinet member for a student club. As a varsity athlete for three years, she earned accolades like MVP and proudly represented the PHS athletic department.

One of Kelly's proudest achievements was earning the State Seal of Biliteracy through her commitment to the Spanish Language Pathway.

"My commitment came in through consistency," she notes. "That's something I believe really set me apart." She also participated in EAOP (Early Academic Outreach Program), which provided guidance on her college path, and volunteered consistently outside of school.

Her hard work paid off—Kelly was accepted to UC Irvine, UC Santa Barbara, California Lutheran University, and several CSU campuses including CSU Northridge, CSU Los Angeles, and CSU Long Beach.

This fall, she'll be joining the Matador family at California State University, Northridge, where she'll major in Kinesiology (Exercise Science). "GO MATADORS!!!" she says with excitement.

Kelly offers this smart, heartfelt advice:

"Keep track of everything you do in high school—whether it's academic, athletic, or extracurricular. It's much more convenient to write things down as you go rather than trying to recall everything from the previous 3-4 years." She also adds: "Do not procrastinate! Please, don't wait until the very last minute. Most importantly, have fun! Step out of your comfort zone. Join clubs, run for cabinet, play a sport, volunteer, go to events. You'll make memories and meet people you won't forget—just by being yourself."





KIMBERLY FLORES

As Kimberly prepares to graduate, she reflects on the experiences that shaped her journey—beginning with her early involvement in VISION Young Leaders' Academy.

"It was the first thing that exposed me to a world of volunteering and helping my community," she says. "I had never done anything like it before, which influenced me to join clubs and volunteer more in high school." That early exposure to service sparked a passion that guided her throughout the next four years.

Kimberly describes her high school experience as "one of the best and most exciting four years of my life so far." Although she admits the beginning was "somewhat intimidating, as one might expect," she quickly found her rhythm by stepping outside her comfort zone. "You begin to encounter new experiences, meet new people, and engage in activities you wouldn't normally try," she

reflects. Some of her favorite memories include football games, field trips, school rallies, dances, and senior sunrise.

Balancing everything wasn't easy. "One of the challenges I faced was finding time for everything I wanted to do amidst all the schoolwork," Kimberly shares. But through that challenge, she learned the importance of managing both responsibilities and free time: "It's essential to maintain a steady pace."

Academically, Kimberly has been a standout. With a 4.49 GPA and a challenging load of Honors and AP courses, she has consistently gone above and beyond. Her accomplishments also include several academic awards and active involvement in clubs like French Club, California Scholarship Federation, Key Club, and Archery Club. On top of that, she was a starter on the varsity tennis team for three years.

"My strong academic achievements made me an excellent candidate for university acceptance," she notes. "I believe that well-crafted essays also played a significant role in securing my positions at these schools." And the results speak for themselves—Kimberly was accepted to UC Santa Barbara, UC Irvine, Cal Lutheran, Cal State Long Beach, Cal State Los Angeles, and Cal State Northridge.

This fall, she'll be heading to California State University, Northridge, where she'll major in Child and Adolescent Development – Applied Sciences.

Kimberly offers this advice for future students:

"Enjoy the moment and do things you wouldn't normally do." She encourages students to get involved early: "Join clubs and go to school events. Not only will you learn new stuff and meet new people, but it also allows you to build your resume and brag sheet for application time in your senior year." Her final piece of wisdom, "Don't start joining everything in your last year. Start as soon as you can and stay as long as possible. That's what shows true commitment."

As we celebrate the achievements of Valeria, Nelly, Kelly, and Kimberly, we are filled with pride and gratitude. Watching these remarkable young women grow into confident, driven, and compassionate leaders has been an honor. Each of them has faced challenges with resilience, pursued their goals with determination, and left a lasting mark on our community.

We are deeply grateful for the opportunity to have played a part in their journeys—from their first steps into leadership and service to the milestones they've now reached. Their stories inspire us, and their futures are bright. We cannot wait to see all that they will accomplish as they continue to grow, lead, and thrive.

Congratulations, graduates—you make us proud!

Congratulations!

