



22<sup>nd</sup> ANNIVERSARY  
**2020 Youth Awards**

Presented by: **Hispanic Heritage** FOUNDATION and its Sponsors

**PURPLE REGION – California and Nevada**

MARCH 16, 2021



MESSAGE FROM  
**JOSE ANTONIO TIJERINO**  
PRESIDENT & CEO  
HISPANIC HERITAGE FOUNDATION



We are thrilled to honor yet another outstanding class of Youth Awardees who will carry on the tradition of vision, commitment, social impact, and “ganas” from past recipients. There is no shortage of Latinx talent across the United States, and our Youth Awardees are all living proof. We are grateful to our dedicated sponsors who understand the importance of investing in the youngest and most dynamic segment of our population. We are in good hands with these outstanding young leaders going forward and believe these are the young leaders of today, not tomorrow. We can’t afford to wait. Following their lead, we will help meet America’s priorities in education, the community and the workforce.

Paz,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'J' and 'T' followed by a long horizontal stroke and a large loop at the end.

**Jose Antonio Tijerino**

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# ANDRÉS DÍAZ

**GOLD**

Major: Communications, Marketing, Business or Political Science

GPA: 3.60

High School: Crystal Springs Uplands School

Heritage: Mexican

Andres wants to go into the world of business to create positive social change. He has been strengthening his abilities to work towards that goal through opportunities in and out of school. His readiness for college-level work has allowed him to take courses at Stanford and Columbia University, where he has taken Marketing and Entrepreneurship classes. As part of his Technology Entrepreneurship class at Stanford University, Andres created CONNECT, an app that streamlines the process of finding and offering volunteering opportunities for volunteers and organizations. At Columbia University, Andres combined his passions for entrepreneurship and activism in a class that explored how marketing, business strategies, technology, and environmentalism can be incorporated into a perfect blend to enable the use of business ventures to promote positive social change. He serves as Vice President of Communications of his school's Student Body Executive Committee and is in many ways the voice and face of his school in his role managing various social media accounts for his school's Student Government, its Robotics Team, and as an Admission Ambassador. He has been entrusted with these roles thanks to his sound judgment and his creative eye for moments and messages that stick. For Andres, being involved in his community is both necessary and educational. For the last four years, he has been involved with My New Red Shoes, a nonprofit organization with the mission of improving the quality of life and well-being of children and youth by reducing the impact of economic inequality across the Bay Area. He plans to continue his academic journey by studying Communications, Marketing, Business, or Political Science at Columbia University, Stanford University, or the University of Southern California.

# ARMANDO LEO DOMINGO

## SILVER

Major: Business Management or Administration

GPA: 4.00

High School: Pioneer Valley High

Heritage: Filipino

Whether it be through watching fashion designers on Project Runway innovating original designs with budget cuts or entrepreneurs on Shark Tank displaying their marketing, negotiating, and financial management skills to Mark Cuban, Armando has been cultivating a passion and a fascination for business and all it entails for years. “What I like about business is that it seeks creativity and originality, empowering any person to transform their idea, whether radical or practical, into a business,” he says. He has channeled his own creativity and ideas into Thrifted Artists, his personal small business venture through which he sells affordable custom stickers, handcrafted jewelry, art, and upcycled and embroidered clothes. Through Thrifted Artists, Armando wants to do his part to fight fast-fashion. He also wants to make sustainable clothing more accessible and strives to use art and fashion to create positive change. Armando has been the voice and advocate for mental health awareness at his school and was chosen to serve as its representative at a roundtable for suicide prevention in his county. Thanks to his work, courage, and passion, he secured a grant for his district to hire more crisis counselors and provide more resources for mental health services. A clear leader in his community, Armando is also an exemplary student. He maintains a 4.0 GPA and stands among the top 1% of his class. He is a Scholar-Athlete and has been a member of his school’s Varsity Volleyball and Water Polo teams. He plans to study Business Management or Administration at Columbia University, Stanford University, or Duke University.

## **MELISSA VENEGAS**

### **BRONZE**

Major: Economics and Finance

GPA: 4.00

High School: North Salinas High School

Heritage: Mexican

Without a full understanding of the concept of business, Melissa was running a small enterprise of her own in fifth grade, walking into school every day with personally handmade bracelets to sell during recess. Encouraged by her classmates and how mesmerized they would be when looking at her bracelets, Melissa continued making and bringing them to school. "I enjoyed being able to supply the demand of jewelry in the playground, and I was even more encouraged to continue production as soon as custom orders began to be placed," she recalls. This childhood business was where Melissa's curiosity for the world of business began. She has since continued to look for opportunities to develop her understanding of the field. After taking an introductory business class at her local community college, she started an internship with the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce. Her learning journey carried on last summer when she participated in Stanford's Summer Session. Focused on business and innovation, she spent her summer diving into the debiting and crediting aspects of accounting and discovering how artificial intelligence is evolving. Melissa is dedicated to giving back to her community and wants to ensure all in her city have access to the same opportunities and resources. She has volunteered at local food banks, organized events that help connect and provide members of her community with the resources they need, and worked to encourage them to advance their education by creating a website with information about college and pursuing higher education, among others. A standout student, Melissa has a 4.0 GPA and is ranked along with the top in her class. She will attend Stanford University, Yale University, or the University of California, Berkeley, where she plans to study Economics and Finance.

## JESSICA RAMOS

GOLD

Major: Education with a minor in Psychology

GPA: 3.93

High School: Skyline Senior High School

Heritage: Mexican

“I inherited my love for teaching children from my mother,” says Oakland, California resident Jessica, who comes from a long line of educators. To prepare for her future career, Jessica is pursuing her school’s Education and Community Health pathway. After completing a number of classes in Child Development and Psychology, she began volunteering at a local elementary school. Beyond a career as an educator, Jessica wants to influence change in our educational system and write policies and legislation to help all students realize and achieve their dreams. Her commitment to education is evidenced in her role as Student Director of her district’s School Board. She is one of two students representing all of Oakland’s student population. Jessica was also one of twelve students selected from her state for consideration for the Student Director position at the California State Board of Education. She has served as Commissioner and Government Affairs Officer for the City of Oakland Youth Advisory Commission. Most recently, she partnered with the Office of the Mayor of Oakland and Twitter’s CEO, Jack Dorsey, to launch the #OaklandUndivided campaign to ensure every student in need has access to a computer, internet, and tech support. Her testimony at an #OaklandUndivided event inspired donors and her community to join the movement to close Oakland’s technological gap. Thanks to her contributions, over 26,000 computers and hotspots were donated to students in her district. Jessica is co-founder and Director of Communications of the Moving Forward Project, an organization dedicated to empowering underserved communities that aims to connect those in need with information about resources and opportunities. This inspiring Latina will attend Stanford University, Swarthmore College, or the University of California, Los Angeles, where she will major in Education and minor in Psychology.

# KELLIE FERNÁNDEZ

## SILVER

Major: Public Policy with a minor in Child Development

GPA: 3.82

High School: Cerritos High School

Heritage: Cuban

From playing classroom with her cousins when she was little to serving as her school's Educators Rising club President as a junior and a senior, Kellie has been forging her way towards becoming a teacher for years. She is enrolled in her school's Teacher Track, a pathway for students interested in pursuing careers in education through which she has learned about teaching methodologies and the psychology of learning. Before school went virtual, Kellie served as a student teacher every Monday and Tuesday at her local elementary school, working directly with students, and experiencing first-hand how teaching can impact their lives. Kellie is the founder and President of her school's Latino club, Latinos Unidos. Wanting to increase representation and recognizing a need, she applied to create the club and fought with her fellow club members after an initial rejection to ensure her school's Latino community had a space for them to connect and a club to represent them. As her school adapted to new settings throughout last year, Kellie worked to maintain Latinos Unidos active and engaging. Her club hosted an online conference with members of the Latino Chamber of Commerce, a virtual tour of the Latin American Museum of Art, and a workshop on mental health support, among other events. Kellie is also a member of her school's Model United Nations club and its cross country and track and field teams. She is a dedicated leader, student, and athlete. She plans on majoring in Public Policy and minoring in Child Development at the University of Southern California, Claremont McKenna College, or the University of California, Irvine.

# PAULINA LÁZARO ALEMÁN

## BRONZE

Major: Education, Spanish, and English

GPA: 3.82

High School: Edison High School

Heritage: Mexican

Paulina became interested in teaching while volunteering for the summer school program at a local elementary school in 2019. The following summer, interested in further exploring a future career in education and gaining some hands-on experience, she interned at a Teacher's Academy Summer Program. At the Teacher's Academy, Paulina learned techniques she could apply to improve students' learning experiences and got to use her Spanish-language skills while participating in the Academy's Spanish dual immersion program, teaching children K-3. This Fresno, California resident is passionate about what life has to offer her: an education, sports to stay physically and mentally well, dance, and various enriching opportunities that give her the chance to grow and learn. Some of those opportunities have included giving back to her community by volunteering when possible, helping with Thanksgiving food distribution and Christmas toy drives, among other acts of service. At her school, Paulina works to close the communication gap faced by non-English-speaking students by volunteering as a peer mentor. She finds purpose in learning and teaching because she wants to better understand and help others better understand the world around them. She is driven by curiosity and compassion to continuously learn and discover. Paulina will be the first in her family to receive a four-year degree. She wants to honor her family and her roots by helping others do the same. She will attend Fresno Pacific University, Fresno City College, or California State University, Fresno, and pursue degrees in Education, English, and Spanish.

# MARIO CARRILLO-BELLO

## GOLD

Major: Mechanical Engineering

GPA: 3.81

High School: Alisal High School

Heritage: Mexican

For Mario, engineering is the avenue through which he can combine his passions for physics and math to turn his thoughts into reality. For the last three years, he has been taking a series of robotics and engineering design and development courses as part of his school's Engineering Academy. While working to prepare for a career as a mechanical engineer, he has also taken the highest math and physics courses offered at his school. Mario is involved in a number of extracurricular activities at his high school. Not fully satisfied with all the options available and wanting to learn more about his interests, this driven Latino leader founded his school's Mathletics club and Robotics Remotely Operated Vehicle team. Most notably, in an effort to help students at his school struggling with distance learning, last year, Mario and a group of his peers founded Alisal Tutoring Service, a nonprofit tutorial program providing free live tutoring to his fellow schoolmates on an array of academic subjects. The proud son of a farmworker, Mario has faced many challenges in his journey but has sacrificed and worked arduously not to let anything get in his way towards rising to become one of the top students at his school. He is guided by an immense hunger for learning, fierce curiosity, and a resolute desire to forge a better future for him and his family. This fall, he will make his way to New York City to attend Columbia University and study Mechanical Engineering on a full-ride as a QuestBridge National College Match Scholarship recipient.



# ERICK TORRES

## SILVER

Major: Aerospace Engineering with a minor in Finance

GPA: 4.00

High School: North Salinas High School

Heritage: Mexican

Growing up in Salinas, California, known as "The Salad Bowl of the World" for its vast and bountiful agricultural industry, has shown Erick the scarcity of engineering opportunities in rural low-income regions across America. Yet, it has also led him to understand how valuable these opportunities are and has inspired his commitment to maximizing his school's community exposure to STEM by creating these opportunities himself. Erick started his school's Physics Club and organized its first trips to science and engineering laboratories. He ensured costs were covered for all so that there were no economic barriers stopping anyone from participating. He has advocated for the addition of new STEM courses at his high school by collecting signatures, garnering student interest, finding appropriate teachers, and organizing school-wide meetings with his school's principal to allow his peers to further explore their potential and interests. Erick also serves as President of his school's Calculus Club and is a Leadership Enterprise for a Diverse America (LEDA) Scholar. LEDA's mission is to increase the representation of diverse voices at the tables where decisions are made by identifying and developing the academic and leadership potential of exceptional students from under-resourced backgrounds. With a 4.0 GPA and ranking at number one out of 501 students in his class, Erick is a model of academic excellence. During nightfall, he often goes out to the lettuce fields in his town, fields that have employed his family and fed him his entire life. "Not to look down to check for healthy lettuce or the critters within the soil, but to look up at the night sky. With no light pollution, I stare in awe while thinking of the limitless possibilities for space exploration... I [have] realized that I want to travel the stars," he tells us. In pursuit of his dreams, Erick will attend the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Stanford University, or Princeton University, where he will major in Aerospace Engineering and minor in Finance.

# GUILLERMO GONZÁLEZ

## BRONZE

Major: Mechanical Engineering with a minor in Economics

GPA: 3.87

High School: James A. Garfield High School

Heritage: Mexican

The thought of a career that combined all the academic elements Guillermo enjoyed—mathematics, science, problem-solving—with creative thinking so intrigued him that after first learning about the field of engineering from his 9th grade Honors Algebra teacher, he looked for outside opportunities to learn more about the subject since his school did not offer any engineering courses. The summer of 2018, he participated in the Cal Poly Engineering Possibilities in College (EPIC) Summer Camp at San Luis Obispo. EPIC is a weeklong residential program where Guillermo explored the world of engineering through hands-on labs that introduced him to various branches of engineering. Upon beginning his sophomore year, excited about everything he had learned and wanting to teach his peers about the field, he established East Los Engineers, his school's first engineering club. Since its inception, Guillermo has served as the club's President and runs the meetings, organizes activities, invites guest speakers, and researches programs and other opportunities for the club members to apply to and expand their knowledge of the field. Wanting to inspire younger students to pursue careers in STEM, Guillermo partnered with two of his local elementary schools to organize STEM Nights, where East Los Engineers sets up educational stations and engages students along with their parents in fun learning activities. Guillermo is also a student instructor for his school's mariachi music program, a member of its golf team, and a member and representative of its Student Council. Through his role in Student Council, he has spearheaded a number of service opportunities, including organizing canned food, toy, and clothing drives. He is an exemplary student and maintains a 3.87 GPA. He plans to major in Mechanical Engineering and minor in Economics at Columbia University, Stanford University, or the University of California, Berkeley.

# BELÉN TORRES

GOLD

Major: Business Administration

GPA: 3.72

High School: Salinas High School

Heritage: Mexican

Belen took her first dive into entrepreneurship last year when she began furthering her interest in photography and posting her work online. She expanded her reach by uploading her pictures to social media, where her profile became her online photography portfolio. As more people in her community began to follow her, view her work, and recognize her talent, they began to reach out to her to book photography sessions, including many of her classmates who chose Belen to take their senior portraits. Having gained experience through her photography business and learning about how she could use social media to market and grow a venture, she launched a new project, BellesClay, an eco-friendly jewelry shop through which she sells personally handcrafted clay earrings. Aside from running two successful small businesses, Belen takes on an active role in her school and her community. She is the founder and President of her school's Earth Friendly Club, which she established to raise awareness of the environmental impact of our day-to-day choices. Belen has led fundraising efforts for her local animal shelter and asked her school to help by donating pet toys, blankets, food, and other necessities so that the animals at the shelter could have a better environment. She also worked to increase adoption rates to reduce the chances of overcrowding by helping to lower the population of animals at the shelter. Belen has devoted approximately 300 hours of community service throughout her high school career. It is evident she recognizes the importance of being of service and how she can directly influence positive impact in her community, one hour at a time. She will continue growing her businesses and carry on with her community work while attending Sacramento State University, California Polytechnic State University, or the University of California, Riverside. She plans to study Business Administration.

# JULITZA ÁLVAREZ

## SILVER

Major: Business Administration with a minor in Economics

GPA: 4.00

High School: Brawley Union High School

Heritage: Mexican

“Entrepreneurship is like taking a leap of faith,” says Brawley, California resident Julitza. After enrolling in a marketing class last summer, she took her own leap of faith, merging her creativity, sewing skills, passion for sustainable fabrics, and her vision into the creation of a small fashion business. This endeavor has inspired Julitza to pursue a business career. It has connected her with like-minded entrepreneurs and broadened her understanding of how small businesses can influence their communities and promote positive social change. She aims to use her business platform to raise awareness and initiate a change towards more sustainable fashion. Julitza enjoys being able to combine her interests and hobbies with opportunities to give back to her community. She dedicates a large portion of her time to running and training for meets as a member of her school’s Cross Country team and gets excited whenever she has the chance to participate in races that help bring awareness and raise funds for important causes. She ensures that she makes the time to be active in her community and has worked to inspire children in her town to also become involved by teaching them the importance of community service through the Brawley Boys and Girls Club. Committed to academic excellence, Julitza has a 4.0 cumulative GPA and stands at the top of her class, ranked 1st out of 402 students. She will attend the University of California, Berkeley, the University of California, Los Angeles, or the University of California, Riverside, where she plans to major in Business Administration and minor in Economics.

# NICHOLAS MELILLO

## BRONZE

Major: Finance with a minor in Entrepreneurship

GPA: 3.64

High School: Clovis North High School

Heritage: Mexican

In addition to attending his traditional high school, Nicholas has been attending the Center for Advanced Research and Technology (CART) since his junior year to expand his knowledge of business and finance. Through classes at CART, like Digital Marketing and Entrepreneurship and Business and Finance, he has developed business skills through hands-on learning and has worked on creating business plans, financial statements, and personal financial budgets, among other projects. In 11th grade, he co-founded a small gig business, researching undervalued consumer goods, purchasing, and reselling them at higher values. His senior year, wanting to educate his peers on financial topics, he founded his school's Finance Club. Nicholas' financial literacy efforts go beyond school grounds. In 2018, to help his community grow, he started Financial Instruction for Student Triumph (FIST), a local nonprofit focused on educating underprivileged youth about finance. FIST has reached hundreds of children in his community and has expanded its efforts to also serve other underserved populations in his town by launching a campaign to educate the homeless on financial literacy. Nicholas serves as FIST's President and is in charge of overseeing the daily operations and ensuring the organization makes strides towards achieving its mission. This remarkable Latino leader will attend Florida Gulf Coast University, California State University, Fresno, or Clovis Community College. He wants to major in Finance and minor in Entrepreneurship.

## NOLAN MEJÍA

GOLD

Major: Nursing

GPA: 4.00

High School: Sage Creek High School

Heritage: Colombian

One of Nolan's guiding personal missions is to help others and improve their quality of life. Much of what he does is dedicated to fulfilling that mission. The summer of 2019, he interned at the Scripps Research Translational Institute, analyzing data from a clinical trial testing a portable blood pressure monitor. The following summer, he worked to evaluate data from a mobile app that provides users with a score that determines their genetic susceptibility to coronary artery disease and found that these risk scores influenced the app users to make more informed health decisions. Working with these medical innovations and seeing how cutting-edge technologies can positively impact people, which resonated with his mission, sparked his interest in healthcare and science. He is enrolled in his school's four-year biomedical pathway. Through this program, he has learned about numerous diseases, scientific inventions, and laboratory techniques. His junior year, Nolan founded his school's Latinos in STEM Club with the intent to inspire, educate, and motivate Latino youth to pursue careers in STEM. Through his club, he established a weekly after-school program at a local, predominantly Hispanic and low-income elementary school. At every meeting, members of his club teach foundational STEM concepts to children through engaging educational activities. Community service has played a crucial role in Nolan's high school experience. Most remarkably, last year, Nolan launched Grocery Grab, a free grocery-shopping service, supported entirely by high school volunteers, that helps senior citizens and at-risk groups avoid unnecessary exposure to COVID-19. Nolan is an exemplary member of his community and an outstanding scholar. He maintains a 4.0 cumulative GPA, is a member of his school's volleyball and swim teams and its National Honor Society chapter. By taking part in and creating various volunteering opportunities, Nolan has learned that entrepreneurship and high-impact philanthropy are intertwined: "both improve lives and help those in need," he explains. His next major goal is to pioneer his own venture, one that creates medical technology and influences and transforms healthcare in the future. To do this, he plans on majoring in Biomedical Engineering and pursuing a minor in Business Administration. He will attend Stanford University, Duke University, or Vanderbilt University.

# LEONARDO DANIELS

## SILVER

Major: Biological Sciences and Computer Science with a minor in French or Business

GPA: 3.93

High School: Saint Ignatius College Preparatory

Heritage: Mexican

For the past three years, Leonardo has been involved with the Summer Math and Science Honors (SMASH) SMASH Academy, a yearly rigorous five-week summer academic program geared toward historically underrepresented students seeking to pursue STEM careers. Through SMASH, he has developed his critical thinking, leadership, and networking skills and learned to imagine, design, and build prototypes and inventions to give back to his community. This has fueled his mission: to close the American Healthcare's racial divide. Thanks to SMASH, Leonardo has also had the privilege of training at Stanford Hospital, learning about surgical techniques, learning with real cadavers, and becoming AED and CPR certified. Leonardo is a leader and pioneer at his high school. His sophomore year, he became the first Black and the first Latino Class President at his school. Later, he went on to become the first openly bisexual BIPOC student on his school's Executive Student Council. He wants to empower others to take pride in their identity, promote inclusivity, and advocate for marginalized voices. Looking for an internship that encapsulated his goals and his prospective career, Leonardo found Atlas Mental Health. Atlas is a wellness journaling app designed for students, by students, to improve their mental well-being. He now serves as an Atlas Ambassador and has been vital to getting his school's counseling department to promote the use of the app to his fellow schoolmates. First-generation, Afro-Latino Leonardo has faced many hardships throughout his high school career. Still, he has known how to turn obstacles into challenges for him to rise above. He maintains a 3.93 GPA, is a member of his school's volleyball and track and field teams, and serves as President of its French Club. He plans to attend the University of Southern California, Columbia University, or Stanford University, where he will major in Biological Sciences and Computer Science and minor in French or Business.

# RAQUEL DOS SANTOS

## BRONZE

Major: Biological Sciences

GPA: 3.90

High School: Canyon Crest Academy

Heritage: Mexican and Portuguese

Raquel's passion for healthcare and science is fueled by a genuine desire to positively impact the lives of those around her. This San Diego, California resident of Mexican and Portuguese descent, is a co-founder of Scientella, a nonprofit organization dedicated to decreasing the gender gap in STEM. Scientella connects high school girls with corporate sponsors to help them explore careers in STEM, gain valuable work experience, and build professional skills. To date, Raquel has helped dozens of high school girls through her work in Scientella, which has proudly matched them to sponsors from companies such as Microsoft, HP Inc., Vizer, and Kaiser Permanente. Raquel is also a co-founder of Rise Up Tutoring, a tutoring organization that uses all its profits to purchase school and personal care supplies, which they donate to aid under-resourced students from the San Diego school district. Raquel has worked as the Lead Student Consultant in a project for BrainLeap Technologies, a cognitive science company that designs gaze-driven video games to train attention skills in kids with attention deficit challenges. Her team was in charge of investigating the parent decision-making process as it pertained to the purchase of diverse types of solutions to assist children with the management of attention difficulties. She also worked as a consultant for medical equipment company ResMed and pharmaceutical company GlaxoSmithKline to assess the utility of social robots in the management of pediatric asthma. Raquel is a stellar student. She maintains a 3.9 cumulative GPA and has further explored the medical field by getting involved with her school's Young Leaders in Healthcare Club and Natural Medicine Club. She aspires to make a positive difference in the world by providing loving care to children and participating in groundbreaking medical research in her future career as a pediatrician. She will study Biological Sciences while on the pre-medical track at the University of Chicago.

## ITZEL LUNA

### GOLD

Major: Political Science and Journalism

GPA: 3.89

High School: Daniel Pearl Magnet High School

Heritage: Mexican

Itzel is the Print Editor-in-chief of her school's student news website and magazine, The Pearl Post. This Sylmar, California resident attends Daniel Pearl Magnet High School, a school with a focus on journalism and communications. That is where, in 9th grade, Itzel fell in love with journalism. Throughout her high school career, she has produced many hard-hitting news stories, with some of them being selected for publication on the Los Angeles Times High School Insider website. She has reported on numerous notable local stories, including writing about the arrest and subsequent court appearances of a lacrosse coach from a nearby school for sexual misconduct and covering the Los Angeles Unified School District's teachers' 2019 strike. Two of the stories she co-wrote with a classmate on the teachers' strike were published on the Best of School Newspapers Online website, and last summer, one of her stories on the strike was a finalist in the Los Angeles Press Club, going up against stories written by college students. In March of 2019, the Southern California Journalism Education Association awarded Itzel the Jolene Combs Scholarship for her performance at their state write-off. That summer, she attended the University of Southern California's Annenberg Youth Academy, a four-week program focused on civics, leadership, and media. She also participated in the GRAMMY Museum's GRAMMY Camp, a week-long music industry program in which she focused on music journalism. In the fall of her junior year, Itzel was selected to attend the Chicano Youth Leadership Conferences camp. And last summer, she participated in the highly competitive Princeton University Summer Journalism Program. Itzel's work is not limited to print journalism. Her school is part of the PBS NewsHour's Student Reporting Labs, and Itzel has been involved with the videos her school produces, particularly this past December when she was selected to produce behind-the-scenes coverage of the final Democratic primary debate of 2019. This hard-working Latina has garnered national recognition for both her journalism and her academic performance. She is a recipient of the Excellent in News Writing award in the National Student Media Contests at the National High School Journalism Convention and is a QuestBridge National College Match Finalist. She plans to major in Political Science and Journalism at Stanford University, the University of Southern California, or Claremont McKenna College.

# OLIVIA TRUJILLO

## SILVER

Major: Film and Journalism with a minor in Women's and Gender Studies

GPA: 3.96

High School: Pacific Coast Academy

Heritage: Mexican

Olivia has been crafting her talent as an actress through steady growth and evolution since the age of eight. She began her career appearing in television commercials. After filming over twenty-five national commercials, Olivia felt ready to take on more challenging roles. Since then, she has continued to showcase her on-camera acting chops, adding seven television series and more than seven films to date to a growing list of credits, including roles in Spanish and English. She is best known for her role as Aleida Rosales in the Apple+ original series For All Mankind. Some of her other work includes parts in Westside, #REALITYHIGH, The Toy Box, and Drunk History. Last year, despite the ongoing challenges brought on by the pandemic, Olivia worked on a new film out in Spain. Currently in post-production and set to debut later this year, she stars alongside Lucy Hale in the survival thriller Borrego. Despite her busy acting career and the challenge of a rigorous academic curriculum, Olivia still finds ways to give back. Having grown up close to the Mexican border, she is painfully aware of the injustices and difficulties faced by many on their way into the US. The experience of children through these tribulations is what most moves Olivia to want to contribute and make an impact. "I felt the need to assist the children because they are not at fault for any of it," she explains. She partnered with the Sistema para el Desarrollo Integral de la Familia (DIF) in Tijuana, working to support the welfare and strengthening of families looking to achieve self-sufficiency. Through DIF, Olivia also collected donations and engaged the children of these families through educational and recreational activities. Her connection to Tijuana is forged by more than just physical proximity. It is down to the cultural roots she shares with her father, whose family comes from Tijuana and Guadalajara. Olivia has excelled throughout her academic career. She maintains a 3.96 cumulative GPA and is among the top 5% of her graduating class. She plans on pursuing majors in Film and Journalism and a minor in Women's and Gender Studies at New York University, Vassar College, or Sarah Lawrence College.

# ALYSE MURRAY

## BRONZE

Major: Music Composition or Classical Composition

GPA: 3.84

High School: Carlmont High School

Heritage: Mexican

San Carlos, California resident Alyse, sets herself apart through the dedication she pours into her creative pursuits. A childhood love for musical theater and choir developed into an interest to learn how to play instruments, which led to her first piano lesson at the age of five. Now a high school senior, Alyse has grown her interest into an honest passion. Over the years, she has embraced her musical curiosities to broaden her artistic horizons. Her adventure into the world of music led to her discovery of composition. "The idea that one could create music to captivate an audience or provoke certain emotions was thrilling, and so I began to write," she explains. Alyse has been strategic with the classes she has taken throughout her high school experience. She enrolled in Advanced English all four years to strengthen her skills in order to write her own lyrics. She registered for Advanced Computer Science to develop her knowledge of technology and sound and signed up for Orchestra every year. Alyse continued to pursue her love of learning through community college classes, taking courses including Fundamentals of Music, Introduction to Music Technology, among others. She also completed an Introduction to Music Theory and Composition course through the University of California, San Diego Extension Summer Program. Upon completing this course, Alyse could perform an original music piece composed of complex techniques. She continues to learn by experimenting with different skills and techniques, whether she is creating music through piano, viola, voice, or digital media software. In 2019, Alyse won 1st place for her music composition "Restless Wind" at the Reflections Art Contest from her congressional district's Parent Teacher Student Association. A well-rounded student, Alyse's skill set expands beyond the music world. She serves as Captain of her school's Junior Varsity Softball team and illustrates her abilities as a leader in her role as a volunteer board member on the San Carlos Children's Theater Youth Advisory Committee, where she organizes community events to fundraise and emphasize the importance of art and music in youth education. Alyse plans to study Music Composition or Classical Composition at Stanford University, University of Southern California, University of California, Los Angeles.

## **MICHELLE ALAS MOLINA**

### **GOLD**

Major: Urban Studies

GPA: 4.00

High School: Northgate High School

Heritage: Salvadoran

“My opinions and innovation are my greatest weapons,” says Bay Area resident Michelle. The daughter of two Salvadoran immigrants, she feels indebted to her community for accepting her family and building her into who she is today. As a result, service is a guiding pillar in Michelle’s life. She is the Statewide Policy Director for GENup, a student-led social justice organization focused on education advocacy. In her position as Policy Director, she collaborates with school districts and legislators to write proposals and synthesize information to present in the legislature in order to create tangible policy reform. Michelle has pioneered the conversation on adding Racial Equity Task Forces to every school district, recognizing the need for innovative solutions to better serve California’s diverse student population. Last year, she made history by becoming her school district’s first-ever Student Board Member. This young leader is a fierce advocate for student representation and education equity and reform. One of her missions is to ensure that every student in her state has equitable access to quality education. In recognition of her advocacy work, Michelle was selected as one of three finalists for Student Member on the California State Board of Education. She serves as the Region 4 President of the California Association of Student Councils, managing a cabinet of students as they work to provide leadership conferences and promote civic engagement. She is also a Commissioner of the Walnut Creek Youth Leadership Commission, where she has facilitated voter registration drives and undertaken a virtual Cultural Awareness series. Not limited to her policy and advocacy work, Michelle is also an extraordinary student and leader at her school. She maintains a 4.0 GPA and is Co-Captain of her school’s Debate, Cross Country, and Track and Field teams. She is also Co-President of its Model United Nations and National Honor Society chapters. Proud of her roots, Michelle strives to increase Latinx representation in local government. “We as the Latinx community have been silenced for far too long. Our books are placed on the backs of bookshelves, our politicians do not like us, and our celebrities are few and far between. To Hispanics, I say BE LOUD! TAKE UP SPACE! We have been pushed into a corner, and it is time to come out roaring with pride,” she proclaims. She will attend Brown University, Georgetown University, or the University of California, Berkeley, where she plans on pursuing a degree in Urban Studies.

# **BELÉN GUTIÉRREZ**

## **SILVER**

Major: Undecided, leaning towards Political Science, Economics, or Education

GPA: 3.74

High School: Clovis High School

Heritage: Mexican

First-generation Mexican-American Belen first became interested in law and politics while learning about forensics and biotechnology. This Clovis, California resident has been attending the Center for Advanced Research and Technology (CART) since her junior year. At CART, she got the opportunity to expand her understanding of government and the American criminal justice system in her Forensic Research and Biotechnology Lab. Learning more about these topics influenced Belen to consider a career as a criminal defense attorney. Curious and determined to delve further into her newfound interests, she signed up for Law and Order and Policy Lab her senior year. Through this class, Belen has studied major aspects of constitutional, criminal, and civil law. She has worked on projects that have taught her about criminal procedure, how laws are made, and how to make legal arguments. This class has served to encourage Belen to engage in public policy and advocate for policy reform. Of particular interest to her has been advocating for immigration reform. Belen is devoted to being an active member of her community and continuously works to instill the importance of community service in others, encouraging them to get involved. Throughout her high school career, she has volunteered to help at various capacities around her city, including donating her time to help at the Central California Food Bank and the University of California, Davis Medical Center. Belen has been a member of the California Scholarship Federation since 2018. She plans on attending the University of California, Los Angeles, the University of California, Davis, or the University of California, Irvine. She is considering pursuing a degree in Political Science, Economics, or Education.

# LUCAS DOVARGANES

## BRONZE

Major: Political Economy

GPA: 3.82

High School: International School of Los Angeles

Heritage: Mexican and Spanish

For Mexican-Spanish-American Lucas, social justice is about projecting our most positive values onto the laws and norms that govern our society. That is what he aims to do as he advocates for police and policing reform, raising his voice while marching in the middle of the towering financial institutions in downtown Los Angeles, surrounded by peers equally motivated, passionate, and unapologetic for their cause as he. Lucas is the leader of his school's Sunrise Movement hub. The Sunrise Movement is a youth-led nonprofit that strives for increased youth engagement in environmental political action. As Hub Leader, he has led efforts to educate his community, spread climate change awareness, and organize marches and demonstrations to advocate for climate change policy reform. Last year, Lucas volunteered on a congressional campaign, phone banking, and connecting with many voters on a personal level while informing them about his candidate and discussing their concerns regarding the then upcoming elections. "Bringing politics to a personal level impacted me deeply during the campaign," he says. "It exposed me to the human lives that are affected by the decisions that are made in our grand democratic institutions. I [have] vowed to stay grounded and mindful when it comes to political action," declares Lucas. At his school, he serves as the Minister of Ecological Affairs for the Associated Student Body Council. He has been challenging himself throughout his high school career by following a rigorous academic curriculum. He maintains a 3.82 GPA and is on his way to graduating with an International Baccalaureate diploma. He will study Political Economy at Princeton University, Yale University, or the University of California, Berkeley.

# KAITLYN SÁNCHEZ

GOLD

Major: Environmental Science and Policy with a minor in Sustainability

GPA: 3.98

High School: John W. North High School

Heritage: Mexican

Kaitlyn serves as a member of the Riverside Youth Council, a delegation made up of student representatives from schools throughout her district that addresses issues of youth concern as advisory to the Riverside, California Mayor. Through her position in the Youth Council, she serves as a member of the Environmental Sustainability Committee, where she works to develop and support sustainability initiatives and advocates for policies and practices that promote sustainability and environmental justice. While her work in the committee is limited to advocating for sustainability only in her district, it has allowed Kaitlyn the opportunity to network and meet peers that share her same passion for environmental advocacy. Together, they want to promote awareness on social and environmental justice issues on a larger scale and are currently developing a Google site where they can educate the public and advance their advocacy efforts beyond the limits of their city. Kaitlyn has continuously demonstrated her commitment to leadership and hard work during her high school years through her academic success, rich extra-curricular record, and dedication to service. She is the founder and President of her school's Teens Restoring Earth's Environment Club and is a member of her school's chapters of the National Honor Society, the National Society of High School Scholars, and Best Buddies. Last year, she was selected to be a Hispanic Scholarship Fund Scholar and had the opportunity to attend their Youth Leadership Institute. Kaitlyn maintains a 3.98 GPA and stands among the top 1% of her class. She is a National AP Scholar and a Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation Semifinalist. She plans on attending Duke University, Yale University, or the University of California, Berkeley, where she will major in Environmental Science and Policy and minor in Sustainability.

# NATALIA RODRÍGUEZ

## SILVER

Major: Psychology

GPA: 3.91

High School: Mayfield Senior School

Heritage: Mexican

Natalia's most significant source of inspiration to be an advocate for social justice and to work towards her success and that of others like her is the story of her family. "My Mexican immigrant grandparents lived through the scars of racism in the Southwest, attended segregated Mexican-only schools, and only had a basic elementary school education. However, they still fought for access to a better life for their children," tells us Natalia. Her parents were first-generation college students. They struggled financially and navigated the college system with no one to guide them. These are the stories passed down to Natalia that have instilled in her the value of hard work and have taught her to face challenges head-on and fight to empower her community. To promote social advocacy, discuss social justice issues, and help her peers get involved in her community and find ways to be advocates, she founded the Cubs for Social Justice Club at her school. She also serves as Co-head of her school's Latinas Unidas Club and as a member of her school's Student Diversity Council, through which she spearheads initiatives to promote justice, diversity, and inclusion at her school. As Latinas Unidas Co-head, Natalia works to create a safe space for Latina students in a school where they are an underrepresented minority. She also helps spread cultural awareness of the Latino culture through assemblies and special events. Natalia's proudest high school moment occurred when she got the opportunity to interview the President of the United Farm Workers, Teresa Romero. "Working for immigrant rights is a passion of mine, and seeing her in this role made me proud as a young Latina," she recalls. Natalia has excelled in all courses throughout her high school experience. She maintains a 3.91 GPA and has received awards for her academic performance in her classes, including the Theology I Award in 2018 and the Chemistry Award in 2019. She will attend Georgetown University, Boston College, or Fordham University, where she plans to study Psychology.

## SOFÍA ORDUÑA

### BRONZE

Major: International Relations with a minor in Economics

GPA: 4.00

High School: Alameda High School

Heritage: Mexican

Sofia wants to dedicate her life to human rights and social justice work. It all started when she volunteered as a youth attorney for the Centerforce Youth Court, a restorative justice program that provides an alternative to the traditional juvenile justice system. “Centerforce had community service and programs to help arrested kids expunge their records, but I noticed the majority of the kids arrested were youth of color,” remembers Sofia. This inspired her to get involved and look for ways in which she could offer support. She joined the Alliance for Girls (AFG), a coalition that brings together Bay Area organizations committed to improving the lives of local girls, as a youth board member and a youth researcher. As a researcher, Sofia’s first assignment led to the Together We Rise report. This report reflected the thoughts of youth of color in the Bay Area, focusing on their experiences and needs, and highlighted the importance of investing in the lives of young women of color to help make California a more just and equitable state. She has since continued working on several projects as an AFG youth board member and has represented AFG and her community on state and national advocacy initiatives, including the National Young Women’s Initiative, to advance state and federal policies. Her research and involvement have contributed to the passing of a resolution that will make Bay Area Rapid Transit safer for girls and gender-expansive youth. Sofia is also devoted to making an impact at her school and has served as Diversity Commissioner on her school’s Associated Student Body. Through this role, she organized her school’s first Women in STEAM panel when she was a freshman. This panel hosted a group of notable entrepreneurs in technology, engineering, movie production, and architecture to answer students’ questions and share perspectives. The event was so successful that she repeated it as a biannual event ever since, only stopping once pandemic regulations were set in place. “I specifically invited women of color in STEAM fields. I wanted to show students that everyone has a place in STEAM and give students the chance to meet entrepreneurs with similar backgrounds and experiences as them,” Sofia shares. This ardent Latina leader is deeply committed to championing the needs of her community. She plans to major in International Relations and minor in Economics at New York University, Columbia University, or the University of California, Berkeley.

## YARENCY AVELAR

GOLD

Major: Computer Science with a minor in Psychology, Communications, or Business

GPA: 3.98

High School: Aspire Lionel Wilson College Preparatory Academy

Heritage: Mexican

“Walking into the Intro to CS club of Aim High, an academic summer program I did back in 2015, I didn’t realize that I’d fall in love with the concept of computer science just within a few hours,” says Oakland, California resident Yarency. Her first coding creation was an interactive game where the character, a sprite, glided across the screen and changed colors every time the spacebar was pressed. Fascinated by what she had developed and the potential to continue creating, she set herself on a path to learn more about computer science. Although her school did not offer any programming courses or extracurricular activities, Yarency was determined. She looked for outside opportunities, took part in hackathons, and joined Google CodeNext her freshman year, a computer science education program for Black and Latinx high schoolers. For the past few summers, she has participated in the Summer Math and Science Honors (SMASH) Academy at Stanford University, a three-year intensive STEM-focused residential program. Last year, she also joined the Curie Academy at Cornell University, a 1-week residential program for women who excel in math and science. Serving her community is vital to Yarency’s high school experience. Determined to inspire empathy and create a sense of community, she founded the Student Community Service Ambassadors Club at her school. Through her club, she has led efforts to collect food for the Alameda Food Bank, beautify her school grounds and community through clean-ups, and tutor students. She has fiercely advocated to promote STEM education and bring more STEM opportunities and resources to her community. Because of her advocacy work, Yarency was invited to speak to the US House of Representatives on behalf of low-income Aspire Public schools and students nationwide. “I used this opportunity to express my concern for the lack of STEM resources in my community and expressed my perspective on how funding could create positive change in underserved communities and inspire new pathways for students like myself,” says Yarency. Thanks to her work, her school now offers an AP Computer Science class. A remarkable leader and student, Yarency has a 4.0 cumulative GPA. She will continue advocating for more access to STEM while studying at Stanford University, Harvey Mudd College, or Santa Clara University. She plans to major in Computer Science and minor in Psychology, Communications, or Business.

## MEGAN KOJIMA

### SILVER

Major: : Mechanical Engineering

GPA: 4.00

High School: Leland High School

Heritage: Mexican

Megan grew up a curious child, always interested in how things worked and how they were built. STEM classes were her favorite. She excelled in them and loved getting to learn about how the world worked through hands-on experiments. Over the years, her curiosity and creativity led her to work on her own prototypes for different products that she would dream up. As she entered high school, she had a goal in mind; she wanted to begin her path towards becoming an engineer. “Since the beginning of high school, I’ve known that I’ve wanted to solve problems through engineering,” says Megan, who wants to develop assistive and rehabilitation technologies to help people with physical disabilities achieve greater independence, thrive, and succeed. She has embraced her interest in engineering by focusing on extracurricular activities that expose her to the field and develop her skills. Megan has participated in the Design the Future program at Stanford University, an award-winning STEM summer program teaches high school students how to design and build products for individuals with disabilities. For the past two years, she has been involved with the Society of Women Engineers (SWE), a nonprofit educational and service organization dedicated to empowering women to advance in the field of engineering. She is a recipient of the SWE Northrop Grumman Community Award for devising a strategy to get more middle and high school girls involved in STEM and encourage them to pursue careers in STEM. Last summer, she completed an Intro to Engineering Graphics course at her local community college, learning the principles of the graphic language of engineering as expressed through sketching and computer-aided design. Megan is enthusiastic about giving back to her community. To be of service and give her peers opportunities to get involved in their community, she founded her school’s Collect and Nourish Club. The club’s mission is to provide non-perishable food to her local food bank, Second Harvest. She has dedicated close to 300 hours of service throughout her high school years. Megan is an outstanding student, she maintains a 4.0 cumulative GPA and has a schedule packed with AP courses. She is also a member of the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers and her school’s Robotics team. She plans to pursue a Mechanical Engineering degree at the University of California, Irvine, the University of California, Los Angeles, or the University of California, San Diego.

## JOSELYN NAVARRO

### BRONZE

Major: Psychology

GPA: 3.94

High School: Leadership Public Schools Richmond

Heritage: Mexican

Richmond, California resident Joselyn, decided to challenge herself last summer. She applied to and was selected to participate in the Genesys Works program, an intensive eight-week program where students receive technical and professional skills training with the mission of preparing them for career success. Through the program, Joselyn explored new fields and developed new capabilities as she took Introduction to Business and Data Analytics and Google Information Technology Support courses. She came into the program with no prior data analytics knowledge and left understanding basic concepts of data analytics and the difference between various topics like statistical analysis, data science, data mining, and business analytics to be able to determine which approach is best for a given problem. “The most important thing I learned was the intersection of career paths,” says Joselyn. “While taking Data Analytics, I realized I could apply my new understanding of data manipulation and interpretation to areas of my personal interest, such as healthcare,” she explains. Upon successful completion of the program, Joselyn was offered a paid internship with Salesforce. At Salesforce, she works as an intern for the Intellectual Property Team. Her day-to-day job includes analyzing and interpreting data to provide the team with strategic recommendations. Joselyn finds ways to be of service to her community. Most recently, she and a group of her friends put together care packages, which included face masks, hand-sanitizers, personal care products, food, and clothing, to distribute to the homeless population in her city. This driven Latina has an impressive 3.94 cumulative GPA and is an AP Scholar. She will pursue a Psychology degree at Dominican University of California, San Francisco State University, or the University of California, Berkeley.