SONOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

OUTSTANDING ACADEMIC
VALERIA SUAREZ VEGA · BIOCHEMISTRY

Valeria Suarez Vega was born and raised in Michoacán, Mexico but moved to the United States at the beginning of her senior year of high school in June 2014. She left her parents behind to have a better education and live in the land of opportunity. She has been academically proficient since elementary school, which is evident from the fact that she has been on the Dean's list since arriving at Sonoma State and graduated with a degree in biochemistry and a 3.96 GPA. She was a Presidential Scholar and a recipient of a Chemistry Department Scholarship. She was actively involved in extra-curricular activities like student government, the chemistry club, and the rowing team. She was the Treasurer of Sonoma State's Chemistry Club and worked with faculty members to establish a SACNAS student chapter at Sonoma State. She also worked with Professor Jon M. Fukuto using metalloproteins and redox active species. Her dream to pursue a PhD in bioinorganic chemistry started from this work. She has published some of her work in the Journal of Chemical Research in Toxicology, in a paper that studied the export of reducing species from the cells and the possible implications. In summer 2018, she went to the TAMU REU program where she worked on the synthesis and characterization of Ni-Fe complexes that have possible implications on hydrogen oxidation and reduction for renewable energy storage. She is proud to be the first person in her family graduating with a college degree and plans to continue her studies and pursue a PhD in chemistry.

OUTSTANDING ACADEMIC
JENNIFER JUAREZ YOC · BIOLOGY

Jennifer Juarez Yoc is a biology and Spanish double major with a minor in Chicano and Latino studies. Her parents fled from Guatemala to escape the civil war. To survive, they recycled bottles and cans. During her childhood, she and her pregnant mother faced homelessness. When her brother was born, the physicians hospitalized him for a month. In this time of crisis, she advocated for her sibling and mother. Her exposure to a medical setting and to a linguistic disparity ignited her early desire to pursue a career in medicine. Now, her family resides in San Francisco's degraded public housing. Last year, she provided medical home care due to her mother's ovarian cyst removal and to vertigo. Her mother and her are co-parenting, as she is the English speaker at home who advocates for her three younger siblings and mother. Currently, she is the diversity officer of the Pre-Health Professions club, and a MESA tutor and mentor. In addition, she volunteers with the Future Faces of Family Medicine Residency Program, where she works with Dr. Hansen to conduct outreach at high schools, translate newsletters, and mentor 20 students. Her SSU pre-health minority students are engaging in projects to improve the resources of the residency clinic. In a year, Jennifer will be the first in her family to graduate from college and will continue to pursue her aspiration to become a medical doctor.

OUTSTANDING RESEARCH IN STEM
IAN OCAMPO · GEOLOGY

Ian Ocampo is interested in the formation and evolution of deep terrestrial planetary interiors. At Sonoma State University, Ian was given the tools to think about the chemical and structural makeup of the Earth's crust and mantle. He applied these tools during his summer internship at the Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of Natural History, where he worked with top geoscientists conducting experiments to recreate some of the earliest conditions on Earth. During this internship, Ian was exposed to experimental and analytical instruments, previously been unavailable to him, which helped to shift his focus to the deep mantles and metallic cores of rocky planets. Prior to enrolling at SSU, Ian spent five years pursuing a career in music. While travelling the western United States with a jazz inspired rock band, he found himself marveling at the red canyons of Arizona, the snow-capped peaks of the Colorado Rockies and Grand Tetons, and the vastness of Crater Lake in Oregon. Those geologic features sparked his curiosity and he decided to earn his undergraduate degree. With the help of CSU-LSAMP and the McNair Scholars Program, he has been able to work with both Dr. Laura Waters and Dr. Bogdan Negru investigating the geochemical nature of early Earth. Ian will begin his PhD in both mineral physics and material science at Princeton University, where he will use high temperature-pressure techniques to subject geologic materials to the extreme conditions of the core for a better understanding of how our universe and solar system have developed.

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OUTSTANDING IMPROVEMENT
DREW HORTON · MATHEMATICS

In high school, Drew hated mathematics. She entered Sonoma State as an art studio major in the fall of 2009, failed her classes, and dropped out of school. She started working to support herself, and in spring of 2015, she resumed her studies at the local community college, paying her own way. While taking an algebra class, she realized math wasn't what she thought it was. She continued to take math classes, and after completing the calculus sequence decided to switch from a Spanish major to pure math. She transferred to Sonoma State in the fall of 2017, and since then has had a perfect 4.00 GPA. She was president of the Sonoma State math club, and was a Supplemental Instruction Leader for most of her time at Sonoma State. Drew is extremely thankful for the support and opportunities given to her through CSU-LSAMP. It allowed her to participate in an REU in Uzbekistan in the summer of 2018, and helped her apply to many graduate programs. She is very excited to be pursuing her PhD at the University of Colorado this fall. Through the CSU-LSAMP program, she has done research in Ramsey Theory, more specifically working to count the total number of Pseudo Progressions, which are a generalization of arithmetic progressions. She and her cohort have presented their findings at one of the weekly math colloquiums, and have presented a poster of their work at several academic venues.