

## Silvia Catalan

Running cross country at Harper College, helping care for her younger brother, Efrain, while her mother worked two jobs, transferring to Lewis University and finally receiving a Nursing Degree from the Romeoville Catholic university, Sylvia Catalan admits her greatest challenge was time management.

Sylvia, however, gives credit to EB 211 and teachers at Palatine High School for providing invaluable practical support and guidance.

“I really couldn’t have done this without EB 211 and my mentor, Jacqueline Meraz’s support,” recalled Silvia. “She gave me a lot of helpful tips and helped me fill out forms and reviewed my scholarship requests. I was also able to open up about personal matters that were bothering me and I was able to easily contact her if I had questions. She was one of the people cheering me on throughout my college journey and her words of encouragement kept me motivated. I truly appreciate the role she has played in my life.”

As she prepares for her State Nursing Exams, Silvia looks back on her decision to attend Harper College and knows it was a wise choice, thanks to Palatine High School’s Asa Gordon, a teacher involved with District 211’s Project Excel. She admits that attending a convenient, highly regarded community college was not her first choice, but one that now provides a more secure future.

“Mr. Gordon knew everyone was thinking of going to a four-year school. I really wanted that too, especially to get the dorm experience. But he encouraged everyone to be practical and apply to Harper, so we would all have more options.”

Silvia applied and was accepted to Harper and received the college’s Distinguished Trustee Scholarship, which covers tuition and a \$500 book stipend. Such practical advice over the years means that she can start her career with just \$15,000 in student loans. And that’s one more thing she can easily manage.