



...opening a world of possibilities

LEARNING TO RUN

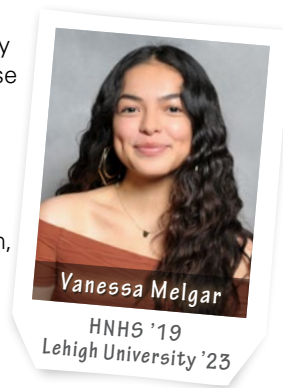
When I was born, my parents never thought I would ever walk. My feet were fused together. After many surgeries, I was eventually able to walk at 11 months, but my feet still had problems developing. As hard as it was for me, it was nothing compared to the threats my family faced living in Guatemala. When I was six, our family sought asylum in the U.S. We moved to Oakland and things at home were tough. Money was scarce, and of course, none of us spoke English. When I started school, I felt completely alone. I did not fit in. Kids teased me because I had to wear Timberlands to keep my feet from turning inward.

Seventh grade was a rough year. My friends were drinking, doing drugs, and sneaking out. I mostly kept to myself and became a target for bullies. I was shy and isolated, and sometimes I got in fights. I burrowed inside myself, never raised my hand, and refused to cry. Crying was for the weak, I thought. I was a girl with no sense of who she was.

When **achieve** and Holy Names came into my life, everything changed. At first, being in an all-girl environment made me nervous. At school I had learned that girls were mean. But **achieve** and HNHS provided me with a physical and emotional safe place. I embraced myself and forgot about being judged by others. Having an all-girl space gave me the opportunity to come out of my shell to explore, learn to trust, take risks, find out who I am, and gain confidence. By subtracting boys, I got to play every role, solve every problem, and learn from peer role models. I tried new things without fear of judgment. I signed up for sports like cross country and volleyball. I asked questions and took risks. I bonded with girls who were there to build each other up, not tear each other down. I became outspoken and unafraid. My **achieve** Family provided me with a safe and supportive environment that enabled me to take on

every challenge. I have changed the way I interact with my peers at school because of **achieve**. I have built a stronger me.

achieve inspired me to be a leader. I am now Student Body President, a Capital Campaign Ambassador, Peer Mediation Trainer, part of the Campus Ministry Team, and Co-Captain for the Cross Country team. My leadership activities make me feel complete. I know I want to help my community and that I have the skills to make a real difference in people's lives.



achieve has opened my eyes and expanded my possibilities. Through **achieve** I explored different career paths. Last summer I did an engineering program at UC Berkeley focusing on nanotechnology and robotics. I am disappointed that only 24% of people in STEM fields are women, and I hope I can contribute to changing that. I am excited to say that I will go to Lehigh University in the fall, thanks to **achieve** staff nominating me for a competitive program called Posse. I will be the first person in my family to go to college.

Before **achieve**, I was a girl with no sense of who she was. Now, I embrace myself for who I am. I have learned to trust people, and I know that my **achieve** brothers, sisters, and staff will always be there for me. I would never be where I am today without the resources and support from **achieve**.

Every day I am reminded that I can and will succeed. **achieve** helped me become a young adult who now has the necessary skills to live a better life, to be a leader, and to make a difference in my community. The next chapter in my life is just starting, and as long as I remember who I am, and what **achieve** taught me, I can be anything I set out to be. I started life not being able to walk, and now I know I can run.

CLASS OF 2019 COLLEGE ACCEPTANCES

Albion College	Cornell College	Hiram College	McDaniel College
Allegheny College	College of the Holy Cross	Hope College	Middlebury College
Bates College	College of Wooster	Jacksonville University	Morehouse College
Beloit College	Connecticut College	Juniata College	Norwich University
Bentley University	Earlham College	Kenyon College	St. Olaf College
Bowdoin College	Emory & Henry College	Lafayette University	Southwestern University
Carleton College	Gettysburg University	Lawrence University	Stetson University
Centre College	Guilford College	Lehigh University	Trinity College
Coe College	Gustavus Adolphus College	Macalester College	Whitman College

CHANGE

“Change is the only constant” is a phrase I have heard my whole life. Although it feels as if my time at Mercy has come and gone all too soon, I will never forget the lessons I have learned in high school and through the **achieve** Program.

High school has held many challenges for me, both academically and personally. As a daughter of a single mother, life has been anything but simple. My father has always struggled with alcoholic and abusive tendencies. As soon as I turned 11, he realized that playing a father figure was not in his deck of cards, and decided to trade his father status for a bottle of vodka. I never felt an emotional absence without my father, as my mother taught me love that my father never could. My sister, however, did not feel the same. In my freshman year of high school, she developed severe depression, which has progressively worsened. Through her worst times, it has always been the love from my mother and me that has brought her back from the edge.

Although my family situation is less than ideal, my mother and sister have provided me with love and support, which never leaves me wanting for more. Additionally, both my academics and school community helped me overcome my family challenges. During lectures and class activities, I am able to immerse myself in the moment, dedicate myself to my work, and forget the issues at home for a while. I have also found a great sense of community with my classmates and **achieve** sisters. I know that I can always count on school to be a stable and welcoming environment, which would not have been possible without **achieve**.

MY JOURNEY

I am a biracial kid from Bayview Hunters Point, a neighborhood notorious for gang violence and hazardous environmental factors, and I dream of becoming a plastic surgeon. I am the youngest child of three. My father is a taxi driver, originally from Nigeria. My mother is a security guard and an immigrant from Samoa.

My journey through high school did not come without its hardships. I watched my mother overcome lymphoma, a blood cancer, and tried to offer encouragement to my father, who struggles in a rapidly dying taxi industry. My mother was diagnosed with Stage 3 lymphoma my sophomore year, which required me to muster an inner strength that I had no clue I had. As she was treated with chemotherapy, I was with her every step of the way. However, my siblings and I are still working to overcome my father’s obstacle. Due to the growth of rideshare companies, my father returns home a little later each night, trying to earn the salary he once made. We can only imagine how hard he works to be able to put food on the table and pay the bills, but he shows no sign of sadness or fatigue, which inspires me to work that much harder.

Being in the **achieve** Program has helped me cultivate some of the skills I already knew I had growing up, such as natural leadership, initiative, and empathy. **achieve** Scholars hold more responsibility on campus, and with more responsibility comes a higher level of expectation. I take pride in being an active role model for my peers both inside and outside of school. I also learned the importance of giving back to those in need of assistance through community service. I picture life as a

achieve is much more than a scholarship, as it provides unique experiences and useful wisdom. I feel most grateful for the meaningful connections I have made through **achieve** with my mentors and fellow scholars. **achieve** gave me mentors who are always in my corner. It is an incredible feeling knowing that if I ever have a problem, I have a community I can turn to for help. Moreover, **achieve** has introduced me to a group of people who have quickly become my best friends. Although I entered **achieve** freshman year simply seeking a scholarship, I ended up finding a family instead. I have made connections through this program which I am certain will last a lifetime.

achieve allowed me the unforgettable experience of traveling to Boston for tour of colleges. Before the tour, I was hesitant to attend an out of state college, as I feared leaving my family. However, as we toured college campuses and explored Boston, I discovered that there is a world outside of the Bay Area, which is different, interesting, and demands to be explored. After this trip, I knew that pushing myself to attend an out of state college would prove to be a rewarding experience.

achieve has enriched my four years at Mercy with meaningful relationships and experiences that will undoubtedly help me in the years to come. I know no words that can express my gratitude for the opportunities **achieve** has given me. As I enter the next stage of my life, I will take with me these valuable life lessons and this amazing community, certain that my future will be filled with adventures and learning.

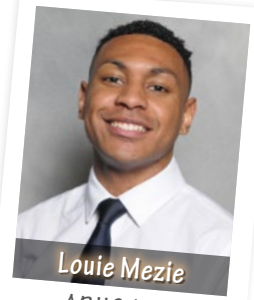


Tatiana Jimenez
MHS '19
Carleton College '23

constantly revolving circle. At any point, I could be at the bottom just as easily as I could be at the top.

achieve has been a helping hand throughout my high school career. I often wonder where I would be without having had the aid of the program and all the opportunities it offered. This past summer I was able to shadow and help a plastic surgeon at UCSF Benioff Children’s Hospital. This was a dream come true for me because I was able to imagine my future self performing the surgeries that I was seeing right before my eyes. **achieve** also guided me in the college process, providing ACT/SAT Prep classes, which helped better prepare me for both standardized tests. Without the assistance of the **achieve** staff in my college application process, I would have been lost as my parents, immigrants who were never able to attend college, could not help.

I discovered the **achieve** Program four years ago. I knew I wanted to be successful, but had no clue what I wanted to do with my future. I now plan on pursuing my dream of going into medicine. With all the knowledge and experiences I have gained through **achieve**, I am better equipped to adapt to whatever obstacles life throws my way. I will not forget my duty to give back to the community, and one day, to the very neighborhood where I grew up. The guidance and mentorship of the **achieve** Program has shaped me into the man I am today—confident in my abilities and ready to tackle the next step in my journey.



Louie Mezie
ARHS '19
Lawrence Univ. '23

LEARNING ABOUT MYSELF

I am a Mexican-American boy from Oakland, the son of an immigrant, single-mother from Mascota, Jalisco. I have always liked learning about the world. I am a quiet person, tending to be laid back and calm, but I love to make people laugh. Most importantly, I strive for internal happiness and peace, so no matter what I do in life I can be at peace with who I am.

Growing up I struggled with various personal challenges. I had to learn what I like and why, so that I would not just follow the crowd. This was challenging because it took time for me to realize who I wanted to be, versus what others expected. I have also had to examine how personal relationships impacted my life. Growing up without a father, I had to accept that he was not in the picture. Once I learned to appreciate everything that I *do* have, I was able to accept how good my life actually is. Now that I am a senior and have completed the college application process, I realize that my worldview is much different than most of my peers, which has opened me up to a world that I cannot wait to explore.

Being a part of the **achieve** Program has opened me up to a world of possibilities. It has given me a variety of opportunities and experiences that I would have never otherwise received. **achieve** has pushed me out of my comfort zone, taught me the importance of paying it forward, and gave me real life experiences despite only being in high school. Because of **achieve**, I became more involved with school leadership activities such as the

Campus Ministry Executive Board, and I became President of the Spanish Honors Society. Through community service, **achieve** helped me realize my passion for giving back, and I hope to be able to continue this throughout my life.

Two highlights from being in **achieve** were the Boston College Tour my junior year and the summer internships. The college tour helped me see that going to college outside of California would not be as frightening as I had thought. The trip also helped me grow close to my **achieve** brothers and sisters. The summer internships exposed me to day-to-day working life, while teaching me practical skills such as commuting and how to pay taxes. They also provided me with the opportunity to explore what I might, or might not, like to do in the future.

I am about to enter a new chapter in my life. I will be attending Bowdoin College in Maine in the fall. At the moment, I hope to pursue a career in computer science, but that can always change. I want to learn more about the world and other people's views. I hope to be able to pay forward everything I have received in my life. Mostly, I want to be happy with myself. No matter where I end up, I know I can use all that I have learned from being in **achieve** to benefit others and myself.



Nick Nido, Josh Dueñas, Alex Lee, Harrick Wu, Louie Mezie
ARHS '19 recipients of various memorial and Achieve Scholarships



Kaylianna Cadena and Teresa Ascencio, HNHS '19
Recipients of the Gerson Bakar Achievement Awards



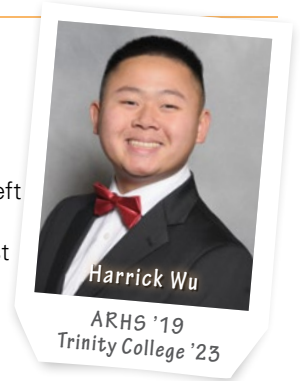
Class of 2019 at the annual Christmas party



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PERSONAL GROWTH



I am the son of low-income immigrant parents from China, and because of their hard work and sacrifices, I have the privilege of living in the United States. They left their friends and family to move to a place where they hardly knew a soul and did not speak the language, just so their future children could have more opportunities. Even though they did not have enough money to support a family of four, their minds were set on having their children live in the “land of opportunity.” As a result, without money to pay for daycare, they sent my sister and me to live separately with different relatives in China, so that they could earn money without having to pay for daycare. When it was time for us to start school in the United States, they picked us up and brought us to our rented American home with a table full of food. Because of them, I am who I am today.

Although we were eventually reunited after three years apart, I struggled to connect with my family. I barely knew them. My mom worked long hours every day for almost the entire week. My dad worked far from home, only returning to the family one day a week. My parents being my example, I did the best I could in my job as a student, and because of “bookwormness,” my social life was never how I wanted it to be.

It was not until high school that I started to grow as a person, and **achieve** was the catalyst that made it all happen. The social life that I once lacked was found when **achieve** mentors taught me the importance of a balanced lifestyle. By giving me a planner that I otherwise would have never touched, I was able to find time for myself while keeping up with my studies. With my parents always working, **achieve** was there to give advice to guide me through difficult choices, like whether to give up band for physics. **achieve** also taught me how to breeze through job or college interviews, allowing me to show off who I am beyond the test scores and transcripts.

One **achieve** highlight that really had a profound effect on me was when I was given the opportunity to intern in the Arts Department of KQED. During the five weeks I was there, I was able to deepen my passion for writing. I experienced what it was like to be a news reporter, a profession that I would have never considered. I was allowed to find my own story to write about, and even interviewed an influential “activist,” a person who creates art to push for social and political change. KQED will always have a place in my heart as two of my pieces have been published on their website, which not many high schoolers can say. I had been narrow minded in what profession I wanted to have since childhood, but because of **achieve**’s role and my experience at KQED, I am more open to career options such as news writing or music. Without **achieve**, I would have gone down a path only with a narrow mindset.

The most important things I will remember from my four year experience in **achieve** are the life lessons and ideals I learned. I learned the importance of community. I am motivated to give back to the communities that supported me so that other low-income immigrant children can have the same opportunities that I have had, which allowed me to be who and where I am today. Without **achieve**, I would have only taken things, but because of them, the importance of giving will always be in my heart. 🍷



201 Filbert Street, Suite 400
San Francisco, CA 94133
415.576.8100
www.achieveprogram.org