

# achieve

*...opening a world of possibilities*

## DISCOVERING A NEW PASSION

Because of my summer internship with UC Berkeley Unboxing Data Science, also known as BUDS, I discovered a new passion: Computer Science. At BUDS, we were given weekly tasks and challenges. To complete these tasks, we researched and collected large amounts of data, and our job was to sift through and analyze it. We would start off every day in the main Zoom room with a discussion, led by our supervisor, about a current event revolving around social justice or politics. After this, we would usually break into small groups of six, including two UC Berkeley students who were our team leads. Then, a guest speaker would join us and give an inspirational talk about his or her career and contribution to Data Science. Our day would end with a small recap of the day and our reflecting on what we had learned.

The first two weeks of the internship were mostly instructional. Before interning at BUDS, I did not know what Data Science was. I quickly learned that it is about gathering and analyzing data, then filtering it to extract information based on your needs. A major component of Data Science is a programming language called Python. We practiced Python using "Jupyter Notebook," which allowed us to create a code and run it automatically to see results. Just like any other language, memorization is key. It was difficult memorizing all the different functions, but our supervisor supplied us with a reference document that guided us through our work. Despite Python being a difficult language, I slowly started enjoying the satisfying feeling one gets

when creating a code, running it, and having it work out how you had intended.

After the first two weeks, we were finally given our first project. My small group worked on comparing California's and New York's COVID patterns. With our data, we found that New York was slowly stabilizing their cases while those in California kept rising. Our second project was about comparing the racial biases in Germany's and England's soccer teams. We came to the conclusion that players with a darker complexion were given more red cards than players with lighter complexions. These two projects not only taught us more about Data Science, but also about how our society deals with challenges, whether they are physical or mental.

Interning at BUDS taught me about how technology can be used for the betterment of humanity. Oftentimes we underestimate the impact of technology on our society. During these times, technology has become a huge resource for communication, and it is important to not take it for granted. I learned that Data Science is something I am very interested in as a future career. Before interning at BUDS, I did not know what I wanted to pursue. I now know that Computer and Data Science have become passions of mine, and I am eager to learn more about the impact of technology on our world.



CLASS OF 2024 (partial)

## LEARNING ABOUT FINANCE

During the summer, I had the wonderful opportunity to intern at UC Berkeley's University Development and Alumni Relations' (UDAR), with their Financial Planning & Analysis group. UDAR is basically Berkeley's fundraising department, and has raised billions of dollars for UC Berkeley. My supervisor and her team all have key roles in running UDAR's financial processes. Throughout my internship, I met with them individually and learned what each does. Everyone was very kind, friendly, and patient with me.

I was assigned weekly projects. For the first three weeks, I did research on Berkeley's leadership, the different groups that make up UDAR, and Budgeting 101. I was then tasked to write numerous summaries of everything I had learned, which I would go over with my supervisor every Tuesday. In my fourth week, I learned the basics of Google Sheets, such as formatting and using formulas. My new Google Sheets and budgeting skills were challenged with a budgeting exercise. I used sample data and answered budgeting questions while using my new Google Sheets skills, such as filtering to find specific data in huge financial data sets.

In between working on my projects, I would have meetings with my coworkers. I learned about what they do, the systems used in finance,

and I was shown secret databases that only some have access to. Overall, I learned what the financial world is all about.

In my final week, I was tasked to create a ten-minute presentation about everything I had done and learned. I thought it would be stressful because I had never accomplished anything like that before. In the end, I was able to pull through and get it done. My supervisor and coworkers were surprised by what I created in a short period of time, and said that it exceeded their expectations. They said things such as, "That was better than most presentations I've seen from adults," and "That was so good that I don't know what to say. I feel like a proud mother."

Although I could not physically be in the office, it was still a great learning experience. I learned what finance and accounting is all about. It was not what I had expected. I have always been told that finance is all numbers and you just add and subtract, but it is nothing like that. It is an entire process that takes organization and lots of planning. I really enjoyed my time with UC Berkeley's UDAR Financial Planning & Analysis group. This experience has made me think about pursuing a career in finance.



Jamm Magaling  
ARHS '22

## LIFE WITH COVID-19

The year 2020 was already hard enough with the announcement of my high school closing, forcing me to transfer to a new school for my senior year. But when San Francisco ordered a shelter-in-place, Mercy transitioned to distance learning. With so many unknowns, my parents were unable to work at their nail salon. My parents struggled to buy food for our household and pay utility bills. For an entire month, my mother went to the local food bank to pick up groceries and had us participate in a temporary meal plan called the U.S. Food Relief. Not only was my day busy from picking up groceries, but my siblings and I found it difficult transitioning to virtual classes. Our Wi-Fi was overwhelmed and my parents could not afford to upgrade. There were many instances where I lost connection, such as during my finals, which was especially stressful. When school was in session, my parents struggled to understand the concept of online school and that, even though I was at home, I was still unavailable. My workspace was so small, and not distraction-free. After the school year ended, my computer was overused and completely melted my motherboard. During the pandemic, I have endured many hardships, which has taught me how to find support from my friends and family.



Natalie Hoang  
MHS '21

During freshman year I was looking forward to having an internship during the summer. Unfortunately, the global pandemic made that impossible, and even things like weekly swimming practice were put on hold. It almost felt like time had paused. However, we had the opportunity to be part of **achieve's** book club, where we read *Warriors Don't Cry* and learned Melba Pattillo Beals' story about her fight to integrate Little Rock's Central High. Being part of the **achieve** book club was an eye opener in the sense that it spiked my interest in researching America's history more thoroughly, and has made me more aware of our system and how different things affect our communities. I expected the book club to be just like a normal class in which we would meet, read the book, and I would answer questions and be on my way. In reality, not only did I get the opportunity to share my views, but I also had the honor to listen to what my peers thought and felt.

This summer was definitely one for the books, but I would like to point out a few things. First, I am extremely grateful for having had the opportunity to be part of a book club, as it has enriched my knowledge. I love reading, which just made it a plus. Second, even though we were not able to meet in person, I am grateful that the **achieve** staff allowed for this to happen virtually; I am not sure who picked the book, but it was an excellent choice. Lastly, we are extremely blessed and lucky to be part of a program like **achieve**.



Aiden Higuera-Toris  
SJND '23

We are continuously shown that hard work and perseverance pays off, no matter what situation we are going through. Distance learning was and is tough, but having **achieve's** support has personally made a difference. Not everyone has this privilege.

When COVID-19 struck, my sister and her three children moved home with my parents, my 13-year old brother, and me. When they moved in, I had two months left of online classes every day from 8:15 am to 3:30 pm, and my parents and my older sister had to go to work. Because I was the oldest person left in the house, I was given the role of babysitter and homemaker. I had to quickly learn to multitask, trying to do all of my own school work online, trying to make sure the older kids also did all of their schoolwork, making and serving breakfast, lunch, and dinner for the five of us, mediating fights between the kids, doing the laundry, and making sure the house was clean and picked up before the adults came home. It was a lot to deal with. When the 2020-2021 school year started, the same responsibilities became mine again. At times I am exhausted, and I sometimes feel like I am going crazy because I have more things to cope with than I can handle. But I want to do my part to keep our family going. And I have learned an important lesson—having kids at a young age is not a good choice!



Carolina Cornejo  
HNHS '21



Precious Offu, HHNS '24

As a freshman at Holy Names and an **achieve** scholar, I have had the opportunity to create cards for residents at Mercy Retirement & Care Center. I have enjoyed being a part of putting a smile on their faces when they open the cards. Even though we are not there to meet with the residents in person, I hope that my cards will reflect the kind of person I am, and that they will see my extra colorful and lively personality.



# community service corner



Josiah Lucas, SJND '22

This year, instead of going to Mercy Retirement & Care Center, we made seasonal cards for the residents to lift their spirits up and let them know someone is thinking of them. This project gave me the opportunity to be creative and relieve some of the stress that has been put on me and many students during the distance learning experience. I am glad I was able to create a card that would make residents feel warm during these tough times.

Kaycee Leyson, MH5B '24

This year, I have been part of an art project for residents who have dementia at the SF Campus for Jewish Living. Since we are unable to see the residents in person, we have been creating objects with lots of color and texture to help them stimulate happy memories.

For my project, I decided to create a stuffed animal puppy because I just got a new puppy, and there is a resident there who said that she really likes dogs. The puppy is bright pink with white stripes and I am working on adding some colorful ribbon to it. At first it was a challenge to make because I didn't know how to sew. I looked up YouTube videos on ways to sew. It took a few hours but I finally learned. I hope the resident enjoys the puppy, and hopefully it will help her remember the dog she used to have!



## IMPROVING LIFE THROUGH RESEARCH

I was a part of an 8-week summer program called Children's Hospital Oakland Research Institute (CHORI). While the COVID pandemic caused the program to go fully virtual for the first time ever, students were still able to participate in research. We were paired with one or two CHORI principal investigators who served as mentors, guiding us through the design of our project.

My project focused on trying to determine if induced pluripotent stem cells (iPSCs) can be used to model Non-Alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease (NAFLD). NAFLD is an umbrella term for a range of liver conditions that, as the name implies, affects people who drink little to no alcohol yet have more than five percent of their liver made up of fat cells. If left untreated, the disease can progress to liver failure or liver cancer, which is not reversible. iPSCs are a type of stem cell that can be converted

into all kinds of cells. Since the pandemic had made it impossible for me to work in the lab, my mentor created iPSCs from blood samples and exposed them to fat to determine if the cells take in the fat in the form of lipid droplets. I used a computer program to measure the amount of fats in the images he sent to me. I then made slides to present my project on the last day of the program to discuss my topic, data, results, and what I intended to do in the future to further my research.

By successfully proving iPSCs can be used to model NAFLD, we can now use these stem cells to test drugs to discover if they have the potential of becoming a cure for NAFLD. Working on a project that can have a real positive impact on the lives of many is extremely gratifying and honorable, and I appreciate CHORI for having given me this opportunity.

Overall, this program was an invaluable use of my summer. I had the opportunity to listen to weekly lectures from doctors and scientists across various medical professions who talked about the paths to their careers and the work they are currently doing. From these lectures, I learned that everyone's journey to a career is not linear. You will face some bumps in the road, which may cause you to redirect your plans. However, if you seek mentorship from those around you, like I did this summer with my mentor, obstacles will become less of a challenge. Because of my CHORI internship, I have built long-lasting connections with my mentors and have expanded my knowledge about the many careers in science that are available.

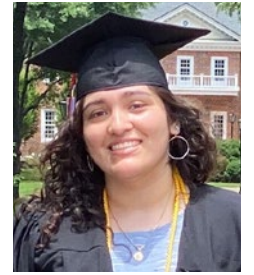




## 2020 INTERNSHIP PROVIDERS

- Achieve Foundation
- Baker Avenue Asset Management
- Berkeley Repertory School of Theatre
- BRIDGE Housing
- Center for Independent Living
- Clorox
- Compass Family Services
- Computer Technologies Program
- Eureka – Girls Inc of Alameda County
- Fortress Investment Group
- Jewish Community Federation and Endowment Fund
- Jewish Family & Children’s Services
- Jewish Vocational Services
- LBA Realty
- UC Berkeley Botanical Garden
- UC Berkeley Data Sciences (BUDS)
- UC Berkeley Haas School of Business
- UC Berkeley International House
- UC Berkeley Lawrence Hall of Science
- UC Berkeley University Development and Alumni Relations
- UCSF Benioff Children’s Hospital Oakland Research Institute

### ALUMNI CORNER



Berenice Fuentes-Juárez  
HNHS '16, Guilford '20

“Striving for success, while embodying a humble character” is a valuable lesson that I learned from my parents. Similar to many families, my parents emigrated to the U.S. from Mexico, seeking the “American Dream” and a better future for their children. Being the oldest child, I witnessed first-hand the barriers that my parents and extended family faced because of their status, background, and lack of education. I was the family translator. I witnessed how hard my parents worked and how little their work and effort were valued. Despite the difficulties that my family has faced, my parents endlessly encouraged me to not be defined by the obstacles that we faced, but rather take advantage of the educational opportunities. I worked hard, and through **achieve** I was given a golden ticket to receiving a college-preparatory education.

Much of the success that I had at HNHS and beyond, I owe to the risk-taking opportunities, academic support, cultural and service experiences provided through **achieve**. When the time came to apply to colleges, I would not have been able to complete the application process without the guidance of the **achieve** staff. I was accepted into many schools all across the U.S., but even with many grants and scholarships, I was not able to go to my dream school. Yet, I was still able to go to a college with a financial aid package that my family and I could afford, and for that I am grateful.

Going to the other side of the country by myself was really hard. To this day, I remember being at the airport and seeing parents going with their children to drop them off at college. Going off to college was a bittersweet experience because my family could not go because of our mixed-status. After a lot of abrazos, besos, and lágrimas, I made a promise to them that I would return in four years as the first college graduate in my family.

At Guilford College in NC, I had the opportunity to be part of the Bonner Scholars Program, a nationally recognized service-oriented scholarship. Bonner was not just an extracurricular program, it provided me with the skills to be successful in college, meet life-long friends, and of course, in return make an impact at various community levels.

Having grown up in the culturally diverse Bay Area, oftentimes the discrepancies and vast barriers that existed for minority students in North Carolina were very apparent. As I began volunteering at schools, I heard many stories of minority students that dropped out of school as early as 9th grade because of discrimination, colorism, and a lack of support from school professionals. I knew that I had to do something. With Bonner guidance, I developed and managed a mentoring site for first-generation minority high school students and families at a high school in NC. The program is still running and I still oversee and train the current project coordinators that are leading the program. Looking back on the number of students that I worked with over those four years, I am humbled by the fact that they trusted me to guide them towards options available in higher education. The drop-out rate over those four years decreased by more than half.

I received a dual degree in Biology and Public Health, with a minor in Spanish. I have always had a great interest in the sciences, and a life-long dream of being a physician. Despite having completed the requirements needed for medical school, I am in a place in my life where I have many other interests and passions that I want to explore, specifically public policy and educational reform. My interest in being an advocate for immigrants and refugees in developing equitable health care and immigration reform expands daily. In addition, I truly enjoy mentoring the future generation to expose them to the vast opportunities available to them.

When people ask me, “So, what’s your next move, career-wise?”, I think of what **achieve** taught us—to pursue what you love, and in doing so you will find your path. Having interned at **achieve** every summer during college, I learned so much. This year, I was honored to be hired as an **achieve** assistant. I have an opportunity to continue helping my **achieve** brothers and sisters and to pay it forward.

In my free time, I am preparing for professional school and spending time with my beloved familia. I continue to delve into service opportunities as an interpreter and health care researcher with Children’s Hospital. I am thankful to **achieve** and my parents for instilling in me the self-confidence and determination to strive to do my best despite all odds. That is why I encourage current **achieve** scholars to be risk-takers and be resilient during tough times because you always have the support and guidance from your **achieve** Family.



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

