

My name is

# Atziry Rodriguez

and I am a first-generation college student from a small town called Cloverdale, CA. I am a third-year majoring in criminology and criminal justice studies aspiring to pursue a master of social work, and work with at-risk youth in the future. Being a full-time college student, working close to 20 hours a week, commuting two hours a day, and being the oldest of three siblings has made achieving my educational goals difficult. Trying to balance everything in my life has not been simple, but I always motivate myself to continue to work hard and never give up on my dreams. These challenges have helped me grow as an individual, both in my academic and personal life, and I know this growth will help me make a difference for youth in my future career.

My involvements on campus include being a student assistant for the School of Education and a research assistant in SSU's Social Sciences Undergraduate Research Initiative program. At the School of Education some of my main responsibilities include working at the front desk assisting the future teachers of tomorrow and communicating with Spanish speaking students. The research project I am working on through the SSURI program is called "When Will People Challenge Injustice?" This project is about analyzing how people respond to witnessing the mistreatment of others. Furthermore, I am registered as a Sonoma County Legal Observer because documenting what occurs in ICE raids could help me better understand how it can prevent future criminal behavior in youth. By providing my assistance to a vulnerable group in society in case of a raid, youth will not have to live in fear of being separated from their families due to their immigration status.

Challenges that I have faced as an SSU student included being a first-generation college student. However, now that I understand the college process, I am able to help younger Latino generations who are thinking of pursuing higher education, but do not know where to begin. In addition, I struggled with putting myself out there and asking for help when I needed it. I made it a daily goal to push myself to be more outgoing whether it was to speak to the person sitting next to me in class or raise my hand in class.

Some positive experiences I have had at SSU include the amazing people I have met because I went out of my comfort zone. Lastly, I was recently sponsored by my respective program, MAP, to attend HACU's 33rd Annual Conference, "Championing Hispanic Higher Education Success" in Chicago, IL. Attending this conference gave me the opportunity to network with successful individuals that understood the challenges that emerge for Hispanics trying to pursue higher education, such as being a first-generation college student. This conference has provided me with the skills to become a better leader and I will be sharing what I have learned with others in the community.

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