

 Scholarship Program Newsletter | Spring 2025

A Message from the Shah Family Foundation & VE

Dear Scholarship Recipients,

College is more than just a place for academic growth—it's a dynamic laboratory for discovering who you truly are. Beyond textbooks and lectures, this is the time when you'll explore your passions, confront your beliefs, and start to shape your future.

In addition to offering scholarships, we're here to support you in pursuing a life that feels both joyful and meaningful.

In this edition of the newsletter, Lesley Bustamante and Jerolina Frías share their stories of navigating personal challenges. Can you relate to their experiences? Do you have an inspiring story of your own? We'd love to hear from you! We plan to publish this newsletter two or three times a year to stay connected with you.

Finally, we hope you embrace the opportunity to reflect on your values, build resilience, and pursue a well-rounded life.

Warm regards,

Deena and Pravin Shah
Deena & Pravin Shah
 D & P Shah Family Foundation

Thomas Smith
Tom Smith
 President & CEO, VE

Reflections for Success

What is one skill or lesson I need to learn to grow into the best version of myself?

What challenges might I face today, and how can I approach it with resilience and confidence?



"Balance: A Skill That Grows"

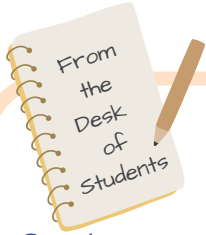


In college, there is a lot to manage between your personal and academic life. I often found myself struggling to juggle the many things I put on my plate. Even when I recognized my limits, I still found it difficult to keep up and excel. It wasn't until I started using my planner efficiently and writing everything down that I began to manage my time better. This might sound like a simple solution, but the key is staying consistent, even when you lack motivation. There is a unique satisfaction in crossing tasks off a to-do list or knowing you've lightened your load just enough to carve out time for yourself. That's an often-overlooked part of time management—making time for self-care.

College can feel overwhelming at times, but staying positive and honest with yourself is crucial. Take the time to assess what's truly manageable for you, and don't hesitate to adjust when needed. Prioritizing your mental health and well-being is just as important as meeting deadlines or acing exams. My advice to anyone navigating college is to invest in a system that works for you, whether it's a planner, a digital calendar, or another method. Use it not only to organize your tasks but also to schedule breaks and moments of self-care. Remember, productivity isn't about doing everything; it's about doing the right things and taking care of yourself along the way.

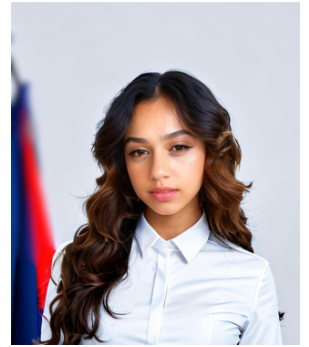
Stay kind to yourself, remain flexible, and trust that finding balance is a skill that grows with time.

Lesley Bustamante
 Graduate, SUNY Geneseo

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For My Family, And for Myself

Growing up as the oldest daughter in a single-parent family, I've always carried a sense of responsibility that shaped me even before I started college. It wasn't just about my dreams but about making sure I paved a way for my little brother and did my best to make things easier for my mom. When it came to choosing a career and going to college, it wasn't as simple as just packing my bags and heading off to campus. I remember being in the kitchen with my mom, trying to explain how living on campus would make it easier on my feet, relieve my pain from commuting to class, and lift a burden off my shoulders. I wanted her to understand why pursuing a degree in sociology and criminology while living on campus mattered so much to me. She wanted stability for me, a career that would guarantee security. But I couldn't shake the feeling that I needed to follow my calling.



Jerolina Frias
Rising Junior,
College of Mount Saint Vincent

It wasn't an easy conversation. I was scared of disappointing her, especially since she had sacrificed so much for our family. I knew she just wanted the best for me, but convincing her that this choice would make me happier felt like walking a tightrope between my dreams and her expectations. There were moments when I wondered if I was being selfish by chasing something that wasn't a sure thing. But I knew deep down that I couldn't live someone else's version of my life. Slowly, she came around as I mentioned that she wouldn't have to worry about the cost because I would become a Resident Assistant (RA) to handle the expenses. I think she saw how determined I was and realized that my health and happiness mattered just as much as my success.

At first, I wanted to dorm for the experience of meeting new people and feeling part of something bigger. But the decision to dorm wasn't just about wanting to live on campus. Commuting between home and campus wasn't easy, especially since I've struggled with a medical condition that makes long commutes painful and exhausting. Living on campus meant I could focus more on my studies and my well-being without the constant strain of traveling back and forth. That's when I started looking into becoming an RA. Becoming an RA wasn't easy and there were moments when I felt completely drained. Between my classes, my RA duties, and helping out back home whenever I could, I barely had time to breathe. But what kept me going was the thought that I wasn't just doing this for myself. I was doing it for my family—for my mom, who worked so hard to give us a good life, and for my little brother, who looks up to me. I found fulfillment in creating a welcoming and supportive environment for my residents. Whether it was helping a homesick student adjust to dorm life, organizing events, or simply being there to listen, I discovered a sense of purpose in my role.

To my fellow students, especially those who might be facing their own doubts and struggles, I want to share a message of hope and perseverance. Your journey may not be linear, and the obstacles you face may seem insurmountable at times, but every challenge is an opportunity to grow. Don't be afraid to pursue your dreams, even if they seem out of reach. Surround yourself with people who believe in you and be that support system for others whenever you can. I'm proud of the person I'm becoming and I know that every step I take is bringing me closer to my dreams.

If there's one thing I've learned from this journey, it's that resilience comes from knowing your "why." My "why" has always been my family. To any student out there who feels like the weight of the world is on their shoulders, just remember that it's okay to struggle. It's okay to doubt yourself. But don't give up.