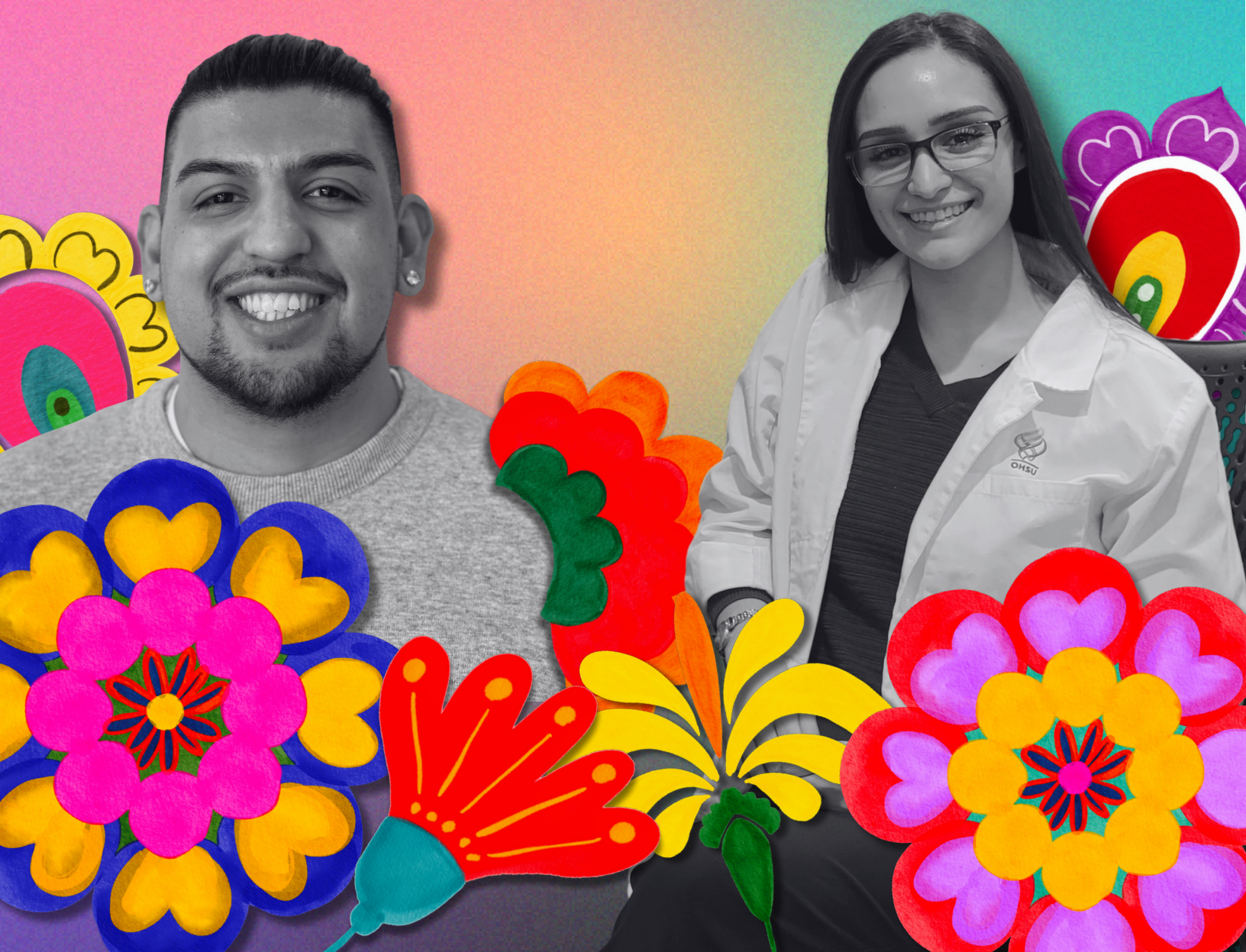


WE ARE OHSU

CELEBRATING
HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH



National Hispanic Heritage Month is celebrated annually in the U.S. from Sept. 15 to Oct. 15, celebrating and paying tribute to the rich heritage of Hispanic Americans and for their positive influence and contributions to our society.

Did you know?

- National Hispanic Heritage Month coincides with the independence anniversaries of some Latin American countries like Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Mexico, Chile and Belize.
- Hispanic Heritage Month has a chosen theme each year. For 2025, the official theme is “Collective Heritage: Honoring the Past, Inspiring the Future”.
- This year on Sept. 15, Mexico made history when their first female president, Claudia Sheinbaum delivered the national Cry of Independence for the 215th anniversary of the start of the Mexican War of Independence from Spain.
- In a departure from the traditional list of heroes, Sheinbaum honored heroines and indigenous and migrant women.
- Spanish is the second most common language in the U.S. with about 13% of the population speaking Spanish at home.
- Hispanic consumers’ buying power in the U.S. is substantial and rapidly growing. For 2025, the U.S. Latino GDP reached a high of \$4.1 trillion in 2025.
- Latin Americans are not a monolith. Each culture has its unique differences, social, economic and cultural preferences that, in addition to social determinants of health, shape their health outcomes.
- The Hispanic Health Paradox is the phenomenon where Hispanic Americans have better health outcomes (like longer life expectancy) on average compared to non-Hispanic White population, despite often facing socioeconomic disadvantages.

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OHSU is a diverse campus with members with different identities. Diversity is one of our core values, and we strive to create an environment of respect and inclusion. We acknowledge that diversity is not always seen, and we want to be intentional. The Center for Diversity and Inclusion started an initiative to highlight OHSU members in an interview series named We Are OHSU. This will go on all year long, where we can uplift and celebrate members of all communities, highlighting their impact on campus and their daily lives and showing everyone the wonderful communities we belong to.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to the Culturas Unidas Employee Resource Group for helping in the nominating OHSU members for this segment.

WE ARE OHSU

YASMINE ROBLES

At a young age, Yasmine had strong aspirations to become a doctor. Since then, she has focused on making her dreams a reality through her studies and work. Yasmine is a first-year graduate student and graduate researcher in the OHSU School of Nursing Ph.D. program, exploring different aspects of sleep medicine and cardiovascular health.

Even though this is Yasmine's first year as a Ph.D. student, she is no stranger to OHSU. Her journey started four years ago as a research assistant in various labs at the School of Nursing. When she isn't doing coursework, you can find Yasmine in a lab coat in the Sleep, Chronobiology and Health Lab, focusing on studying the relationships between circadian rhythms and sleep patterns and how they affect metabolism, cognition and overall health.

THE SCHOOL OF NURSING PH.D. PROGRAM AND GRADUATION

"What I love most about my program is that I have a smaller-than-average cohort. I am one of three first-year Ph.D. students at the School of Nursing. This allows me to connect with my classmates,

faculty and mentors more easily. I also enjoy the fact that my program is within a well-known research institution that focuses on and prioritizes the importance of medical research for our community.

My goal upon completing my program is to become a neuroscientist. I wish to study the relationships between sleep and neuroendocrine — nervous system and hormones — outcomes in patients with chronic illness. To do this, I plan to secure a postdoctoral position after graduating so that I can pursue a faculty position and establish my own research lab."

BEHIND YASMINE'S DREAMS AND BREAKING GLASS CEILINGS

Our aspirations are often tied to our interests, skills and values. For Yasmine, it also includes her motivation to support her family and break barriers for others in her community.

"Since childhood, I have dreamt of becoming a doctor. Having seen my father overcome two strokes and watching him learn

how to keep going in life even after the fact inspired me to keep going myself. He always reminded me of the importance of education and the value of learning as much as possible.

Initially, I wanted to become a physician, but as I grew up, I realized I was becoming an inquisitive person who always questioned everything. From personal experience and during my time in health care, I have witnessed a sequence of health disparities among



minority groups due to language barriers and access to translators. As a health care professional, I've been inspired by many of our Spanish-speaking patients to help bring about this change. Overall, my curiosity and passion for helping my community and people who are ill are what motivated me to pursue a Ph.D."

In the U.S., about 2% of the population holds a Ph.D., with about 1% of those individuals being women and less than 1% of them being Latina women. Yasmine is currently the only Latina in her Ph.D. program.

"My experiences and identity have influenced both my professional and academic journeys. I am pursuing a Ph.D. to help patients and represent my community — a community we know has been underrepresented for a very long time.

There are times when I feel like I am buried in work, but I always have my parents and my community in the back of my mind.

I always say, 'Nope, I need to do this for my community. I need to do this for all Latinas. I need to do this for future generations. I need to break that cycle, and I must prove that our people can pursue a Ph.D., can pursue higher

education, regardless of their identity.' Breaking those barriers has always been something very meaningful to me."

GROUNDING IN IDENTITY — A FIRST- GENERATION TRILINGUAL LATINA

Our identities are intersectional, giving us all unique experiences and various ways to live life. For Yasmine, her identity shows up in her values — like her perseverance and work ethic — often values ingrained in Hispanic culture to survive anything life throws at us.

"I am a first-generation trilingual Latina student, native in English, Spanish and American Sign Language, with parents from Michoacán and Zacatecas, Mexico. I was born in Silverton, Oregon, and raised in Woodburn, Oregon — a relatively small town in the mid-Willamette Valley with the highest percentage of Latino and Hispanic residents in Oregon, comprising about 61% of its population.

Hispanic Heritage Month for me is more than just an annual celebration. It encompasses all our culture

in a way that connects us all. It's a celebration of multiculturalism, history, languages, food, music, stories and more. This is an opportunity for us all to honor and remember those who have contributed, served and helped shape this country.

Two people who come to mind are my parents. Like many Latinos, they grew up with a very strong work ethic. I think it's natural within us to be that way. My parents set that example for me. They worked many years in the agricultural sector and were able to build their way up to managerial positions and a successful retirement.

I feel that the way many Latinos contribute to this country and help shape it is by always being willing to work. We work hard to achieve our goals, even



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YASMINE ROBLES

during stressful times like these. I find this to be true for myself. No matter the circumstances, I always tend to find a way to thrive, even if it takes me a long time.”

BECOMING AN INSPIRATION TO OTHERS

Diverse representation is crucial. It provides real-world validation and ensures different

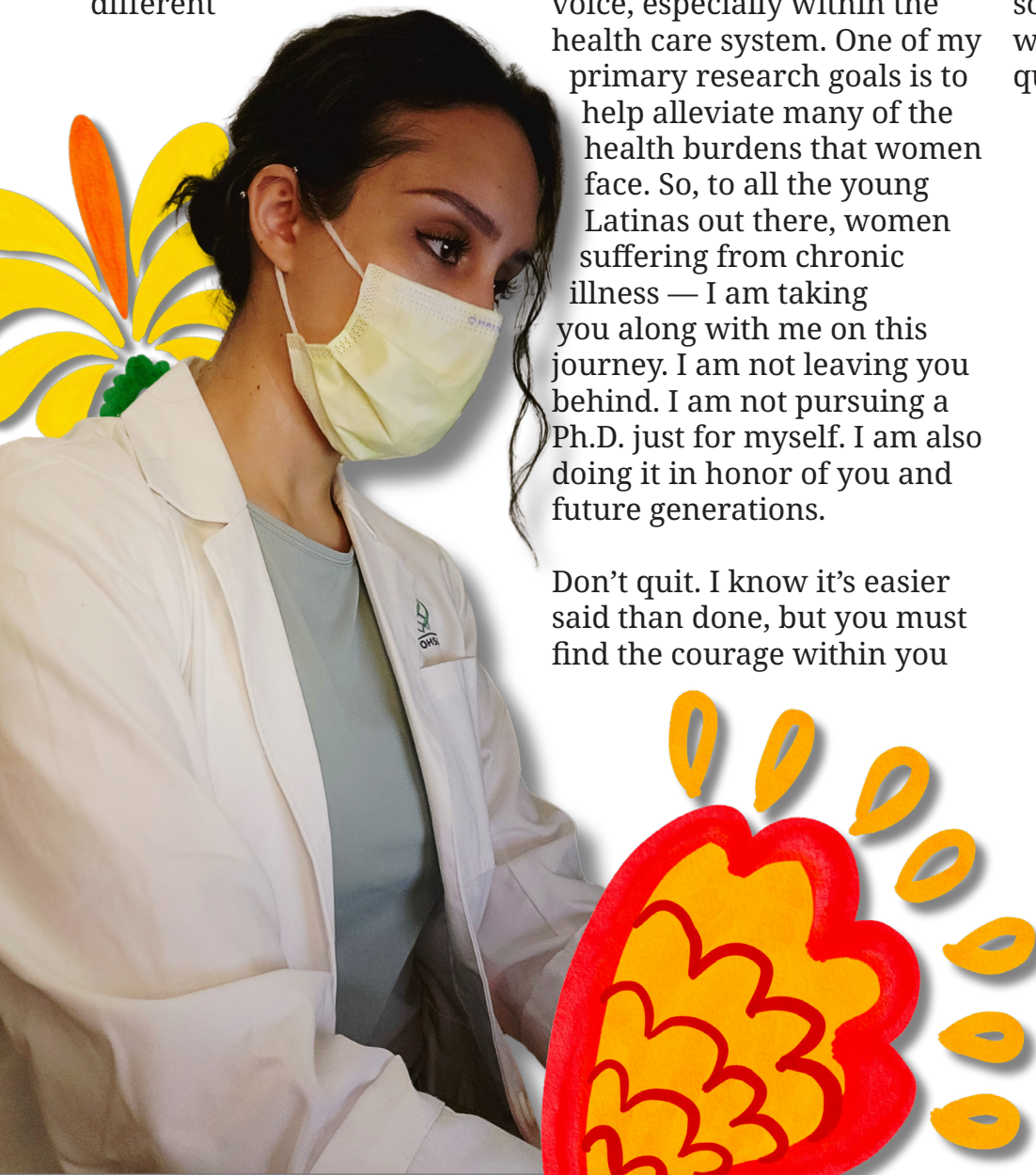
perspectives are included, leading to better outcomes and a more inclusive society. Inspiring others encourages change and helps people see themselves exactly where they want to be.

“I hope to inspire future Latinas and future generations of students by representing them as a Latina myself and serving as their voice, especially within the health care system. One of my primary research goals is to help alleviate many of the health burdens that women face. So, to all the young Latinas out there, women suffering from chronic illness — I am taking you along with me on this journey. I am not leaving you behind. I am not pursuing a Ph.D. just for myself. I am also doing it in honor of you and future generations.

Don’t quit. I know it’s easier said than done, but you must find the courage within you

to really discover yourself — your potential, your strengths, weaknesses and how you can uniquely shape yourself in this world. I firmly believe that everybody enters this world for a purpose.

I came to realize at a young age that everybody is doing their best and that nobody ever has the right to tell you that you cannot do something. So, take things with a grain of salt and never quit.”



WE ARE OHSU

EFRA QUEVEDO-RAMOS

60 miles from Portland, you will find one of OHSU's School of Nursing campuses in Monmouth that provides nursing degrees through Western Oregon University. A large part of the School of Nursing's work is student recruitment; each SoN campus has a dedicated student inclusion and success coordinator to assist pre-nursing students from underrepresented groups.

In Monmouth, the past few years, students have received support from Efra — ranging from traveling to local high schools and college fairs for outreach to guiding students through the various pathways to nursing through peer support, resource distribution and, most importantly, mentorship they can rely on.

BRIDGING THE GAP: SUPPORTING THE NEXT GENERATION OF NURSES

Efra is described by one of his peers as “someone who advocates for students who are struggling with transportation, finances and academics. He shows up with kindness and practical solutions. Efra is a Latino leader who opens doors, builds belonging and brings good energy to every room.”

Mentorship and guidance are pivotal to students from underrepresented groups and rural communities because they often face systemic barriers. Efra is helping bridge those gaps through his mentorship, building confidence and creating a sense of belonging.

“There’s a big demand for nurses. I’m just trying to promote nursing in general and guide students through various pathways. I grew up in this area — here in Salem, Monmouth and Dallas — and I can tell that there’s a big need, especially with hospital deserts everywhere in Oregon. Locally, we’re very fortunate to have a big hospital nearby, but there are still transportation issues people face.

If I’m not doing outreach, I am meeting with students and

answering the questions they have about nursing and our program. People rarely come to rural high schools to provide support to students, so just giving them more awareness about their options is important. Many of them already have a passion for nursing, and finding where to start is often the biggest thing. We want them to just be aware — not many students know about the partnership between OHSU and Western Oregon University and the nursing degrees they can take part in.

We also have a food pantry here on



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EFRA QUEVEDO-RAMOS

campus that we run. So whether it's stocking that up and making sure students are able to have access to some sort of food — whether it's a snack or something they can take home to their family — providing other resources or simply connecting them to anything with WOU, OHSU or the community.”

THE IMPACT OF PROVIDING SUPPORT

“I love supporting students and their growth in this journey. This upcoming year is the first year where some of my outreach is finally being seen in a way. I've been doing this for the last few years, and the high school seniors I provided support to are now students in their second year of college. I made that impact on them to apply to be at our school. We're seeing the numbers increase in recruitment and among our current students. These are aha moments, where everything is clicking.

I am a person they can talk to and support them in a way that is different than a teacher or instructor — I'm just an advisor for them. They can be vulnerable or just tell me what is hard for them. I can be that listening ear so they can say, ‘I know what

I need to do now,’ or ‘I just wanted somebody to know and give me validation.’ I know it's hard and it's a tough program, so we're providing the resources and skills they need to be confident when they're out there. These are the conversations I enjoy the most.”

MICHOACÁN TO OREGON

Mexican immigrants make up roughly 90% of the Hispanic/Latinx population in Oregon, which accounts for about 14% of the state's total population. Latinos and Indigenous students make up nearly one in four K-12 students in Oregon.

“I'm a first-generation immigrant from my parents. They both came here from Las Ranas, Michoacán. It's a very small town. I was born here in Salem, Oregon. I think being proud of who we are is such a cool thing — our experiences and our culture are so unique. I was fortunate to start my life in Salem and see the growth of the Latino community.

When I moved to Dallas, it was different — mostly a white town with a lot of racial history. Once I left that town, I went to college and understood how to be proud

of my culture and dive deeper instead of hiding it. I won't say it's new to me, but it wasn't until college that I was able to finally be proud of having a second language and being proud of my culture. I dove deeper into the food, the music and the culture, and I appreciate it as an adult because when I was younger it was hard to feel proud when being told that having a different skin color was bad and not seeing other people who looked like me.

Getting through that led me to where I am now. I am able to tell students to be proud of where they're from and to embrace their intersectionalities. I can share my experience with language — growing up, I did speak Spanish, and it went away because everyone was pushing English. It's OK to relearn it. Sometimes it's hard to be proud when others are trying to do anything they can to be against it. But that also just makes us stronger individuals and builds a sense of pride.”

CELEBRATING HISPANIC HERITAGE AND CULTURE ALL YEAR ROUND

“I like whenever these heritage months come around and create a spotlight. It's



time to embrace our culture, especially with everything going on right now. I'm finding my own ways to support my community and local businesses. I'm also finding ways to celebrate my culture throughout the year. My family never celebrated Día de los Muertos, but it's now a tradition I'm embracing because my wife and her family do. It's time to spend together, and I like that this is something I get to do now and celebrate."

REPRESENTATION MATTERS

For young people, seeing positive representations of themselves and other diverse communities fosters a sense of belonging, reduces harmful stereotypes and helps prevent feelings of isolation. These experiences often guide us

and can be crucial to our careers.

"Growing up, I was part of college support programs like TRIO, and I had Latino mentors in higher education, which I didn't see often while attending predominantly white schools. Seeing that representation really helped me and reminded me it was OK to take up space and to be different. I'm one of the younger Latinos on our staff and one of the few people of color. We need more Latinos and people of color in these spaces, especially with Spanish being the most spoken language, followed by Vietnamese. There is a need for more representation — students are seeing themselves in me, and it's sending a message saying, 'I can do it too.'"

It's important to remind them that we are in these spaces and, even though it might not be seen often, the representation is growing — and they can be part of it, bringing their culture and unique experiences into the medical field."

Efra recounts how having representation is crucial in health care and the difference it made for his family.

"My story at OHSU started with my mom. My mom was sick, and it wasn't until she had a woman of color as a doctor who advocated for her health and referred her to OHSU to have the care she deserved. When my mom got to OHSU, she was in a very bad health spot. They welcomed her with open arms and told her all of her options. They were able to give her an LVAD, a mechanical device that helps the left ventricle — the main pumping chamber of the heart — pump blood more effectively. If it wasn't for OHSU and those doctors, we would not have gotten two years of my mom being happy, being her normal self and enjoying life before she passed. I will forever be grateful to OHSU for that. So, when I was given the opportunity to apply, it was one of those full-circle moments. Now, I feel more joy and take this a little more seriously because I understand how much of an impact they've made for me and the need for patients and

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EFRA QUEVEDO-RAMOS

the need for patients and their families to have that amount of care.”

SAYINGS THAT INSTILL MOTIVATION

Sayings impact individuals, shaping perception and driving emotion. Positive sayings can motivate us and boost our confidence, giving us an extra push of inspiration when it’s needed most.

For Efra, “Échale ganas” is the saying that first came to mind — which loosely translates to “give it your all” or “do your best,” a motivational saying often used when things get hard and to encourage others to keep going.

“I remember having this ingrained — I don’t have time to procrastinate, and I can’t mess around. My parents instilled hard work in me. They did everything they possibly could to put a roof over our heads and get food on the table. I remember that and all they sacrificed to come to this country with nothing and not taking anything for granted.”

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT FOR STUDENTS

“You belong here!”

At least for our program, faculty are the ones reviewing these applications and doing the interviews. So, when you get selected, that means we want you here. It might not statistically show with the number of people that are there, but know you are wanted here, and we will do everything we can to support you.

Imposter syndrome gets to us sometimes when we’re not in a familiar space or feel left out, but remember we are wanted, we are needed and we are appreciated.”

