

political science at Furman University, Greenville, S.C. He recognized something in Alyssa and recommended her for the Riley Institute's Emerging Public Leaders (EPL) Program, an initiative targeting promising high school students, which was being held at Furman later that summer. By the following March, Alyssa had earned an honorable mention in the EPL's public service project competition for her work in developing a program to improve community life in her hometown by encouraging carpooling and public transportation.

Margaret B. Seymour, United States District Court in South Carolina

Encouraged by her EPL experience, Alyssa applied to Furman, where she enrolled in fall 2008. She took on internships with Riley's Diversity Leadership Initiative, and another as a counselor with the Bridges to a Brighter Future Program, a comprehensive college access and precollege enrichment program for promising high school students whose family income is below the poverty level.

She also participated in the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation program through Riley, which each year sends about 15 students to an international business and economic conference in the Far East. And, she became involved in Furman's Mock Trial Team, leading to an internship at a law firm in Atlanta. Outside of her academic pursuits, Alyssa joined a sorority and participated in the NAACP and the Student League for Black Culture. When she graduated from Furman, Alyssa continued her studies at the Harvard School of Law, from which she graduated in 2015.

Although Alyssa had other choices for her undergraduate experience, she came to see that Furman's size and opportunities would be a place where she could be a leader. As she would recall years later: "I needed Furman, and Furman needed me."

PROVIDING UNFETTERED PATHWAYS

At 18, I was a high school dropout, living out of my car and working as a cashier in New England. It felt as if my life was bound for a destitute future. Fortunately for me, a benevolent family took me in and helped me get back on my feet.



Andy Allred

Arizona State University

Degree: B.S., Nutrition
summa cum laude (2014)

Arizona State University, Tempe

Current position: Graduate studies
Baylor College of Medicine, Houston

Today, at the age of 30, I can't believe the amazing life I am living. In December 2016, I will earn a master's degree from Baylor College of Medicine and then take the national boards to become a physician's assistant or PA. For my master's thesis, I am helping lead a scientific research project at a National Cancer Institute on colorectal cancer, the disease that prematurely took the life of my adolescent father figure.

This September, I will complete a yearlong health policy fellowship with the Physician Assistant Education Association based in Washington, D.C. Most recently I was offered, and I accepted, a postgraduate PA fellowship with the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center. This highly competitive yearlong fellowship will begin in March 2017.

There is no doubt in my mind that the high-quality education I received at Maricopa Community College, Tempe, Ariz., and Arizona State University (ASU), Tempe, played a major role in bridging the gap between my life at 18 and the ever-expanding accomplishments I continue to achieve.

I could not have completed my undergraduate studies in a timely way or with the distinction I earned without the help of AZTransfer, a statewide collaboration to help students navigate their higher education options.

While attending community college, I also worked full time. My work schedule was

unpredictable. Sometimes, I was not able to attend classes in person, so it was empowering to have the option to attend in-person classes at Mesa Community College, Mesa, Ariz., or take hybrid or online courses through Rio Salado College, Tempe, and be guaranteed that my credits would transfer between institutions. In 2011, a counselor at Rio Salado introduced me to the Maricopa to ASU Pathway Program. That transfer program charted a clear course from studying at a community college to graduating with a bachelor's degree. I enrolled in the program and my academic progress accelerated. One year later, I graduated from Rio Salado with high distinction and then seamlessly transitioned to ASU.

While studying at ASU, I was absolutely blown away by how well community college prepared me for upper-level studies. I put in my absolute best efforts and graduated from ASU in only two years. The pathway program helped me efficiently earn a high-quality undergraduate education that has empowered me to reach new heights that I never believed would be possible.

ENCOURAGING AMBITIOUS IDEAS

Arteen Arabshahi joined Karlin Ventures in 2013. The early-stage venture capital fund invests between \$250,000 and \$1.5 million at a time in enterprise software, marketplace, and commerce platforms.

In 2015, Arteen also created and launched Karlin Fellows, a peer-to-peer fellowship program for Los Angeles' rising tech leaders.

Arteen has always had the entrepreneurial bug. Before joining Karlin Ventures, he spearheaded the launch of Built in LA, an online community for digital entrepreneurs and innovators. Even prior to that, his passion for startups flourished while helping run operations at Excelerate Labs, now Techstars Chicago. With such a strong resume in such a short time frame, it's no wonder that Arteen was included in the 2016 Forbes "30 under 30" list in the category of venture capital.

Arteen was first drawn to his field of study because he wanted to be part of Tucson-based University of Arizona's McGuire Entrepreneurship Program. Here he became close to former mentor-in-residence Emre Toker, a venture funding expert whom Arteen counts among his most important mentors.

"The UA taught me how to work hard to stand out," says Arteen. "Once you identify the things that you care about- which for me was entrepreneurship- the world is really your oyster at the UA. The community supported my ambitious ideas and allowed me to pursue all of my passions."

OPENING MANY NEW DOORS

Martha Rivera was 11 years old when she saw a sign for piano lessons less than a block from her family's upstairs apartment in Santa Ana, Calif. "But we didn't have money to pay the \$5," remembers Rivera, the daughter of immigrants. "My mom exchanged labor, doing cleaning, for me to take classes."

Soon, Martha was taking five or six classes a day on various instruments, heading straight to the Orange County Children's Therapeutic Arts Center after school and staying until the founder, Ana Jimenez-Hami, walked her home at night.



Arteen Arabshahi

Arizona State University

Degree: B.S., Nutrition

summa cum laude (2014)

Arizona State University, Tempe

Current position: Graduate studies

Baylor College of Medicine, Houston



Martha Rivera

Chapman University

Degree: B.A., Psychology and

Spanish (2012)

"It got to the point where I was taking too many classes and my mom said, 'You have to start taking care of this yourself,'" Martha says. "So, I started filing and answering phones, teaching, and helping with music therapy."

Chapman University, Orange, Calif.

Current position: Director of Operations and Programs, Nicholas Academic Centers, Santa Ana, Calif.

And so it was that Jimenez-Hami, also a part-time faculty member at Chapman University, Orange, Calif., became the first of Martha's many mentors, starting her on a path that took her to a charter high school for the arts and then to Chapman, where a merit scholarship, institutional aid, and a Pell Grant helped Martha earn her bachelor's degree. From there, it was on to Harvard, where Martha earned an Ed.M. in human development and psychology in 2013.

Although Martha's parents had aspirations for their children, they had limited awareness of the possibilities. Her father, a day laborer who waits for work at a local Home Depot, showed little reaction when Martha told him she got into Harvard. "Then he went on a construction site and was wearing a baseball cap with Harvard on it," she says. "The man who hired him said, 'I noticed the Harvard sticker on your car and the baseball cap.' When my dad told him, 'My daughter is going to Harvard,' I guess the guy flipped out, high-fiving him," says Martha. "My dad came home and hugged me, and said, 'I'm really proud of you.'"

Today, Martha is the director of operations and programs for an after-school program where high school students receive academic services, mentoring, and social services to help them reach college and succeed there. "It's such a rewarding job," Martha says. "But I don't think of it as a job, because I was (one of) them." This fall, Martha plans to apply to doctoral programs, with a goal of one day working in national education policy.

HELPING BREAK NEW GROUND

When Lasenta Lewis-Ellis attended Midlands Technical College, Columbia, S.C., as a single mom, she was living in income-based housing. "I was a welfare recipient at the time, but I wanted more. Now when I go back to MTC, I talk to single parents so that I can share my story. I want them to see that I've been exactly where they are today, and this is what it took for me to get where I am now."



Lasenta Lewis-Ellis

Midlands Technical College

Degree: A.S., Architectural Engineering and Technology (1994), Midlands Technical College Columbia, S.C.

Current position: President and CEO of LLE Construction Group LLC

Lasenta recalls that there were few women in her program when she attended MTC, and very few black women. "I'm still outnumbered in my field, but I never let that stop me." As owner of a construction company, Lasenta's goal is to take old dilapidated spaces and create something useable and viable for people. "We focus on K. 12 schools, school districts, charter schools, private schools, and colleges and universities.

To see students walk into a room that we have renovated is exciting. They leave for spring break or winter break, and they come back into their classroom, and it has new paint and new flooring. It's good, because it contributes to their learning."

Lasenta also runs Need-A-Lift Transportation Services LLC, which provides safe, reliable transportation for children to and from school, and to after-school programs. "It's great for working parents who want their kids to be able to get to extracurricular activities." Lasenta was recently named a 2016 *Enterprising Women* of the Year award winner by *Enterprising Women* magazine. The award spotlights women who are experiencing significant growth in their businesses and women who give back to the community through mentoring, says Lasenta. "To get that award meant the world to me."

OFFERING SPACE TO EXCEL