

2023

Priscilla Somarriba, Executive Leader, Target

National Louis University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.nl.edu/hforalhistories>

Recommended Citation

National Louis University, "Priscilla Somarriba, Executive Leader, Target" (2023). *Harrison Fellows Oral Histories*. 6.

<https://digitalcommons.nl.edu/hforalhistories/6>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Archives and Special Collections at Digital Commons@NLU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Harrison Fellows Oral Histories by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@NLU. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@nl.edu.

I was out of school for about 12 years before I made the decision to go back to school and go to college. I traveled to many universities throughout the Chicago area just to get an idea of what do I for programs, and then, obviously, what type of school environment do I want to be a part of. I went to probably about 6 schools in one day, and a majority of the schools that I went to gave me a feeling like I was wasting their time. So essentially they just gave me information, or somewhere, like, just go online, and you will be able to find more information. When I came to National Louis I had one of the staff actually take the time to sit with me and go through options of education. She said she would help me through FAFS on that process, cause that would be new to me and even if I didn't select National Louis, she would give me resources that would help me, whatever my choice would end up being. And she created a very welcoming experience for me in that moment. So I know that National Louis was a school that I wanted to be a part of. I always loved helping people so I knew that I always wanted to be a teacher when I was younger. So she directed me to the Harrison Fellow program and gave me information about it briefly, and if I wanted to attend that they would help me to continue in that process. As I interviewed for the Harrison Fellows I knew it was an environment that meant a lot to me personally because I had 3 children at the time, so I wanted to be able to be a role model for my kids. Obviously they were getting older. I knew that I wanted them to continue to pursue their education. So I'm really big about making sure that you practice what you preach. So I knew for me to be able to instill in them the importance of an education which I didn't have growing up, that I would have to be the model always so That's why I enrolled at National Louis. And in the Harrison Fellows program that I knew that I would feel accepted being a Hispanic Latina. And then, you know, I just knew that I would have the support that I needed within the school. Just being a parent obviously helping to navigate my scheduling, and then, just being a part of a program that I knew seemed from the beginning that they were really invested in my time. As an NLU student and I'll graduate with my undergrad. It was a very rewarding experience for me as a first generation graduate. I know that it is something that I wanted to continue to install my children, and if by any means they would follow in my footsteps and be a student here as well, that is something I'm looking forward to. But I know it's something that I recommend to all the people in my workforce, at home, in my family, that it's an environment that they're going to love if they want to make those decisions to go to college.

My experience at NLU some of the challenges I faced; being a parent is one of the things that I had to try to navigate. As far as scheduling, you know, dedicating my time to my school work. But NLU provided and opportunities for me to be able to schedule time. So if I needed help with an assignment and I wasn't able to meet in person to, you know, schooling, class time or internship time, they made it available where we can contact someone online. So it made it very accessible. for me to be able to schedule that time. That didn't necessarily need to be in person. Also maybe some of the challenges were maybe just some professors were being a little bit more understanding of circumstances beyond the school. Being more empathetic, I would say for sometimes unforeseen occurrences have been, like myself, like I have 3 children. So sometimes, I couldn't attend class. Just a flexibility on the timeline of when things are due based on needs of the student, I think. Not in all classes, but in some of the classes were a little bit of a challenge. The thing that I love the most about the Harrison Fellows is it created like a network for you, support system. Especially me, I'd been out of school for 12 years. Obviously I wasn't traditional like most of the students are fresh out of high school coming into college. I had a lot of time, you know, I had a family. So it really created an environment where I felt I belong like I was a part regardless of how old you were or how young you were, everyone felt that they were part of a family.

We did lots of activities to support the Hispanic community which helped obviously building network and relationships with people, new people you need. I think that was the best opportunity. And we had our mentor on campus. She was a resource to help us, and would do check-ins in our classrooms. If there was any questions or concerns, we were always able to have a person or an outlet to go to to help encourage us to continue in our higher education. So I think that was a big plus but ultimately like the check-ins were the biggest thing for me. Obviously being out of school I was a little apprehensive of how I would navigate meeting new people, and also adjusting you know school and personal life balance, but it created a support system inside and outside of essentially the classroom. Or you're able to network with your peers and be able to go through things together, as you are part of a cohort. So a majority of your classes were together. So I think that was a big plus for me.

My most memorable experience, I would have to say one year we did where we kind of went into the Latino community and we were a part of Fiesta Del Sol, which is an event in the Latino community where everyone comes out just celebrating the culture. And we were actually able to promote National Louis and the things they offer, and the program that we're in, and the benefits. So just being able to embed that into the community and share that there are resources. A lot of times people may feel like Oh, I can't go to school because I don't have the financial means or don't understand the resources that are available. But just being able to speak to it, and bringing your personal experience with it, and helping connect you know younger teens that are looking, or older people that wanted to do something more like myself. That was kind of a rewarding experience for me.

I think for me it tailored so many different generations like you know people out of fresh out of high school people, you know years out of high school. I think it just kind of brought us together where we understood each other, respected each other. We were able to build those relationships that use zoom, you know, networking that I still have close relationships with Harrison fellows, even years after being out of school, and also continue to network and still speak about my rewarding experience at the school and the program that I was a part of. And although it's not specifically called the Harrison Fellows, as they continue to implement programs such as the Harrison Fellows to continue to drive diversity and inclusion at the school. So I think that's been the most rewarding for me.

I would have to say, if I had to spend any words of encouragement, just continue to push forward; you can do it. There is many resources within the school that you may not be aware of. But continue to network and ask questions. There's never a wrong question to ask. And yeah, just utilize the resources. There are many resources within the school that can help you continue your higher education, and continue further that past that as well. So you know I'm continuing my education. I'm about 8 months away from receiving my master's degree now at National Louis University. So I continue to push for high education and make the best of your experience while you're there.