



# STEM Student Profile



## Jocelyne Perez

*Math Major, transferring to UC Berkeley*

### Future Plans:

- Study statistics and data science at UC Berkeley
- Become a data scientist

### Advice for Students:

- Develop a dedicated mindset through MESA and learn to push past frustration and anxiety



When Jocelyne Perez began her studies at the College of San Mateo, she tested into the lowest math class offered. She had just immigrated from Mexico. “They teach you how to add and subtract in that class,” Perez said. “I was so embarrassed.”

Seven years later, Perez feels like a different person: she’s heading to UC Berkeley to study statistics and data science. Through CSM’s MESA program, she found a support system that helped her define and pursue her career goals. “MESA just completely changed the way I viewed mathematics and my major,” Perez said. “It really changed everything because everyone was so helpful and welcoming.”

With a full course load, Perez worked part-time at a restaurant. Though it was

difficult to balance her busy schedule, she soon shot up from pre-algebra to precalculus. During her third year at CSM, Professor Angel Pilar recognized her potential and encouraged her to join MESA.

*“It made me feel a lot better that I could go there and someone would be happy to help.”*

Previously, Perez had struggled to find a community on campus. At the MESA Center, she felt seen. She was initially an engineering major, but the program made her realize that she wanted to switch to mathematics. “It made me

feel a lot better that I could go there and someone would be happy to help,” Perez said. “Leaving all of that scariness behind was very impactful for my academic journey.”

Perez also leaned heavily on MESA’s counselor to navigate scholarships and the transfer process. As a first-generation college student, it was daunting to apply to a four-year college. She worried her GPA would prevent her from attending more competitive schools. With MESA’s guidance, however, she learned to embrace her story in her application.

Perez vividly remembers the moment she learned that she was accepted into UC Berkeley. She was at work when her acceptance letter popped into her inbox. Joy and disbelief washed over her. “I was

stunned,” Perez said. “My mind was racing so fast. It was such a huge thing for me and my family.”

Perez has some nerves heading to Berkeley, but she knows MESA taught her the skills to succeed. She also won a Latinos in Technology scholarship. She hopes to become a data analyst, finding a practical application for her love of math. “After seven years of struggling, I feel like I can overcome anything,” Perez said.

For Perez, that’s what MESA is about — learning to dream of a brighter future. She hopes students, regardless of setbacks, develop a resolute mindset. “I’m a prime example of that if you don’t give up, anything is possible,” Perez said. “Sometimes you might get frustrated or anxious, but it’s completely worth it.”