



# STEM Student Profile



## Kelly Salazar

*Biology Major*

### Future Plans:

- Transfer to a four-year university in fall 2024

### Advice for Students:

- Join MESA. It has so many resources that will help you succeed at CSM. You will find tutoring, workshops, a supportive community of STEM students, and info about a lot of opportunities.
- Go to office hours and be involved in study groups.



Before coming to the College of San Mateo, Kelly Salazar knew she wanted to study science. Soon, she'll be transferring to a four-year university, majoring in biology. But as a first-generation student, her journey wasn't always easy. "My parents aren't really aware of how the process works," said Kelly, a daughter of Salvadoran immigrants. "So, learning how to navigate through college by myself has been a challenge for me."

At first, it was difficult to find support in such an unfamiliar environment. Kelly struggled to balance her rigorous course load. That's when her older sister, who also studied at CSM, encouraged her to join MESA.

She knew MESA's community would provide Kelly with the foundation she needed to succeed in biology.

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Three years later, CSM's MESA program has helped Kelly find scholarships, tutors, and internship opportunities. Her favorite events are the STEM speaker events, which allow students to expand their

professional network. Kelly also joined the MESA trip to the UC Davis Pre-Health Conference. MESA has taught her how to reach out to professors and be comfortable asking for help. "MESA is very supportive," Kelly said. "it motivates me to reach out to others if I need help and stay on track with my school work."

One opportunity was a six-week summer pre-medical program at Stanford University. At first, she was apprehensive — studying at such a prestigious institution seemed like a long shot. But MESA Program Director Olivia Viveros pushed her to apply, and sure enough, she was accepted.

Kelly was truly inspired by the Stanford School of Medicine, from her science classes, to clinical shadowing, to studying health advocacy. Most memorable to her was a Stanford physician she met: Dr. Cesar Padilla, a Latino who started at a California community college before studying at Harvard Medical School. "Seeing that, as someone who's Latina, it's just very inspiring," Kelly said. "It really made me believe that I belong in medicine, and it's not impossible."

She hopes to transfer in fall 2024. "[My parents] say, 'Whatever you dream of, you can do,'" Kelly said. "So as I've gotten older, I always hear that in the back of my head."