

Woodburn, Oregon is special because it is diverse in its people. People with strong affinity towards culture, tradition and familial respect creates a safe, familiar and homey town. Growing up I always knew that regardless what career path I went down I wanted to work in my home town of Woodburn to support, inspire and give back to people that could resonate with me on any level. It is important for me to work in Woodburn because there are hundreds of students whose experiences are similar to mine. I am a first-generation college student who spoke English as my second language. I grew up navigating new social norms while trying to stay true to my upbringing. I had parents who did not always know how to navigate a new social system, speak the language or have the educational experience to offer support, but wanted the best for their children.

I understand how motivating and challenging the expectations set by one's self and others can be. This is exactly why I am so appreciative of the *On Track OHSU!* program, as I am able work within the town I grew up in, live in, went to school in and love. I am able to work with students individually and in groups to help them grow their interest, preparation and awareness of careers in the health and science field. Fields that are in demand and in desperate need of diversity in people, languages and culture.

Partnering with the district to work directly in classrooms has allowed me to step into a teaching and mentoring role where I have built trust with students that allows me to help them navigate situations and choices, such as financial planning, school selection, scholarships/financial aid, and post-graduation choices. I have noticed that students ask and find value in reflecting on my personal experiences because it is comforting that *someone just like them* did it, and made it through to the after.

I have also found that having a person from the community in this role is comforting to teachers and parents. When leading lessons at the middle school level, teachers have asked me to specifically emphasize that I am from Woodburn, and about how 6th grade middle school math made me cry, but how I loved it in high school thanks to the teachers and support I found. The lesson? That it will get better. Parents who are able to speak in their native language are also comforted knowing that their child will not be the first to leave Woodburn, that their worries about school and safety are valid and that they will be okay because there are people, like myself, who are looking out and checking in about their student's success. The *On Track* program allows to me help students reach their goals while instilling a little fire in them that makes them one want to give back to Woodburn, bringing my work full circle.