

**College/Program:**

College of Optometry, Doctor of Optometry

Hometown:

Redlands, CA

Undergraduate Institution:

UC San Diego

Undergraduate Degree(s):

Human Biology

Hobbies/Interests:

Running, cooking, building legos and binge watching shows/movies

Previous Career:

Student/Optometric Technician

PROFILE

What inspired you to pursue your health sciences career path?

My 6th-grade curiosity in color blindness sparked my exploration of the field, leading me to work as an Optometric Tech during college. I loved every aspect of this experience, as I got to assist people of all ages and got to use pre-testing equipment, which was so fascinating to me. Work-life balance to me

was very important when choosing a career, and it was nice to hear all the doctors at the practice speaking highly of their job.

Describe the biggest challenge you overcame on your path to WesternU.

Deciding to take a gap year before starting at WesternU was one of the most difficult decisions I've made, but ultimately the best choice for my mental health. My anxiety and stress were incredibly overwhelming, leading to intense self-doubt and clouding how I saw myself. Accepting that I needed a break to focus on healing was a significant challenge. While anxiety and self-doubt still arise, they are more manageable thanks to healthier coping strategies I've developed along the way.

Chelsey Alejandra

Romo



Chelsey Alejandra Romo

Why did you choose to attend WesternU?

WesternU's commitment to early patient care was an important factor in my decision. I like that, as a first-year student, I will be able to participate in vision screenings for children in the Pomona School District. Pomona's demographics are also more underserved, and because of that, I could potentially see more disease case patients and make an impact on low-income communities. I also like WesternU's emphasis on interprofessional education, where I'll interact with students from different healthcare professions.

What is your proudest accomplishment?

My proudest accomplishment is graduating from college as a scholar-athlete. Running has always been an integral part of my life, and I knew I had to continue running in college. I was able to find a balance in running both track and cross country all four years of college, while taking rigorous courses to complete my Bachelor of Science. I was able to leave my name in the record book, with the 7th fastest 800-meter time in UCSD history.

Thank you letter to the Board of Trustees:

I am deeply honored to have been selected as a recipient of the Board of Trustees Scholarship for the 2025–2026 academic year. I want to sincerely thank you for this generous award, which will truly have a profound impact on my journey toward becoming an optometrist.

As a first-generation Latina student and the daughter of Mexican immigrants, I have always carried my parents' sacrifices and dreams with me. They came to the United States to create a better future for my younger brother and I, and their hard work has shaped my commitment to education and perseverance. While they have given me endless support, they are unable to help me financially with optometry school. Receiving this scholarship definitely eases a significant burden and allows me to focus on my education with less weight of financial stress.

I chose WesternU because of its commitment to serving diverse and underserved communities which are values that resonate deeply with my own. I aspire to be a provider who not only treats patients, but also empowers and uplifts them, especially those from backgrounds like my own. I am very happy and proud to be on the path toward increasing representation in the field and becoming part of a new generation working to raise the current 5.2% of Hispanic/Latino ODs in the U.S.

In the future, I hope to open multiple practices in underserved areas to increase access to quality eye care. I also want to help bring more diversity into the field by encouraging and mentoring students from underrepresented backgrounds, to pursue optometry. Thank you again for investing in my future. Your generosity means the world to me, and I am committed to honoring this opportunity through my dedication to excellence in this program.

Thank you,
Chelsey Romo, OD '29