Gervilyn Cadimas overcame obstacles as a young immigrant from the Philippines and credits supportive people for helping her make “a smooth assimilation.”

She came to the United States as a teenager without knowing a word of English but determined to master her third language. With encouragement, she participated in the Lions Club speaking contests. She not only gained more confidence and won twice – she found the words to own her story:

“Not many people experienced what I did at a young age: losing a father at eight, moving across the world at 13, and escaping an abusive situation at 15.”

After her father died, her mother worked multiple jobs and barely scraped a living for their family of five. Cadimas and her mother were the first to immigrate to America.

The transition was difficult, not only learning a new language but coping with personal challenges. Cadimas says they lived through and overcame an abusive situation with the support of My Sister’s House, a Sacramento nonprofit organization. Cadimas turned the experience into compassion, volunteering at My Sister’s House as a childcare assistant, providing support for women escaping similar situations.

Her family also dealt with financial hardships. To pursue her education—which she financed on her own—Cadimas worked her way through college and maintained academic excellence, while contributing to the community. She advocated against domestic violence and supported the Philippine National Day Association, a Filipino youth advocacy organization.

For her efforts, Cadimas received numerous scholarships during her senior year, including the Business Alumni Chapter Scholarship. With all the scholarships, she was able to focus solely on academics for the first time and not have to work odd jobs.

In fall 2018, Cadimas graduated magna cum laude with her Bachelor of Science in Business Administration with a concentration in entrepreneurship and finance. Sacramento State honored her as one of the top graduates during Commencement, with the College of Business selecting her for its 2019 Dean’s Award.

Cadimas plans to become an immigration attorney with her ultimate sights on founding a nonprofit. She wants to help immigrants from underrepresented communities with their assimilation to the U.S. “Overcoming great adversity through my adolescence taught me that I can face life's challenges with perseverance and faith, and hopefully inspire those around me.”

“I remember being very scared growing up because I didn’t know the language, but I always knew I had the confidence to handle it. I found the words to own my story.”

— Gervilyn Cadimas

As a senior Gervilyn Cadimas received the Business Alumni Chapter Scholarship.