Somehow the Running Start appellation seems particularly appropriate when referring to Alaina Valenciano. She hit the ground running at Highline, both literally and academically.

Valenciano is graduating from Highline and high school at the same time and with honors.

In addition to her academic exploits, the Filipino-American has been playing sports since elementary school - nine different sports to be specific. During this school year, she played rugby, soccer, and did power lifting.

Off campus, Valenciano plays for the Washington State Loggers, The Rainier Highlanders Club and The Atavus All Stars girls rugby teams.

The Atavus team consists of players from all over the United States and competes in international tournaments. She is currently helping coach her rugby teams after an injury a few months ago, but that is only a temporary slowdown. She will be playing for the UW girls rugby team next season.

“I wish I had a dozen more like her in every class,” Professor Geoff Turck said, who teaches accounting at Highline.

She will also be hitting the books at University of Washington-Tacoma next year with direct admittance to the Milgard School of Business as part of the First Running Start Cohort.

Valenciano will be the first of her family to graduate from a university. She will be working towards a degree in accounting and is not yet positive what career path she intends to follow.

“I have loved my experience at Highline, because it allowed me to interact with a diverse group of people including professors and students,” Valenciano said. “The culture has facilitated my learning, forced me to step out of my comfort zone and gotten me more involved in the classroom, clubs, and around the campus.”

If running to class and around the rugby field still wasn’t enough, she’s also managed to be active in several clubs.

Valenciano’s previous club experience includes the Family Career and Community Leaders of America, Phi Theta Kappa Honors Society, Future Business Leaders of America and Key Club. While attending UW, she plans to get involved with business related clubs, among others.

Whether it’s reading, hanging out with friends or going to movies, Valenciano enjoys being active. She’s a dare-devil, willing to take on all challenges and try new things.

With all that running, perhaps the only one capable of keeping up with her is Maya, her rescue dog.