

## The Big Day of Becoming a University Professional

Being the first generation in their families to earn a degree is for many children of immigrants a dream come true and the most significant step towards prosperity.



Photo: Baruch College / Courtesy



By: [David Ramirez](#) Posted May 21, 2023, 6:00 am EDT

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This is the realization of immigrant families whose parents did not finish their secondary studies or never went to school in their countries and bet on the education of their children as the path to a better quality of life.

Many young people are firmly on that path and have chosen Marketing, Business Administration, in great demand in today's job market. That is the experience of Carolina Castillo, Daniel Ugalde and Bianco Bambaren, students in Class 2023 at Baruch College's Zicklin School of Business, who graduate at the end of this month, becoming the first generation of their families to cross the threshold. of higher studies.

## **Everyone can do it...**

"I am happy, my parents are very proud. They didn't have the opportunity to go to university, but they have sacrificed a lot to make it possible for me to study," says Carolina, who was born in New York and is the eldest of 3 sisters.

For Carolina, graduating from university means seeing her dreams come true. Now waiting to take the big leap to better opportunities and transform her life and that of her community.

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"If I did it, everyone can do it, it's just a matter of proposing it," says Carolina.

Her parents dropped out of high school in the Dominican Republic and immigrated to the United States in 1990. Carolina's mother is an assistant at a senior center and her father owns a winery in Washington Heights.

"I have always valued education and during these years I have met classmates going through difficult financial situations, dealing with demanding classes or because they were not motivated enough," says Carolina, who obtained her degree in Marketing Management and was a mentor in the SEEK program, which supports freshmen immersed in college life at Baruch College.

While studying, Carolina interned at The Cranmere Group and The Uptown Hub, an educational center for youth ages 14-24 in Washington Heights and Inwood that helps people take action, create, and inspire growth within themselves and of their communities.

Carolina was also the President of Women's Empowerment for Success, where she led events that positively impacted students on campus by helping to spread social awareness and inclusion.

"My advice is to continue working hard and keep studying, because the future benefits are invaluable," says the young woman who will start working in the marketing area at L'Oreal's corporate offices in September.



Carolina Castillo will begin her career in Marketing. She is the daughter of Dominican immigrants. /Courtesy Baruch College

## **Solidarity makes us strong**

When Daniel Ugalde came to the United States he was only 5 years old. His parents had to fight hard for family reunification in New York, a common story among immigrants. They are originally from Paute, in the Andean province of Azuay, Ecuador.

This experience made Daniel – who grew up in Flatbush, Brooklyn – make it his goal to go to university and to achieve it, he not only had the support of his parents, but also managed to raise money and buy his books. He was a martial arts instructor for children and washed cars on weekends.

“We have to be supportive and help each other, see each other as a united community, especially at the university. United we can achieve positive changes to enter the world of work”, says Daniel.

Due to his performance and high grades, Daniel was selected as Salutatorian of the Class of 2023, graduating in Finance with a minor in Spanish.

During his college career, Daniel was passionate about helping other students. He was involved with the Association of Latino Professionals of America (ALFA), an organization of which he

was president. Through the ALPFA Accelerator Program, he mentored students and helped them find internships and full-time jobs.

Daniel became further involved with students through the Collegiate Real Estate Network (CREN), where he served as Vice President of Diversity and Inclusion.

“From the world of finance I like Real Estate, from there I think I can have a positive impact. It is the perception I have now because I can see this career in context, not only in terms of improving my quality of life and that of the family, but also in serving by creating jobs for my community”, says Daniel when evaluating his immediate vision.

Last summer Daniel completed an analyst internship at Blackstone, focusing on debt strategies applied to Real Estate. He now has a full-time offer from that company to start working from July.

According to Daniel, many young people don't go on to college because of the pressure to finish high school and start working to help their families.

“I had to work and study simultaneously, I did it because I had time, but my priority was my studies. It is important that parents promote their children's education in order to advance as a family, in my case, my life has changed from the opportunities I have received at Baruch College”.





Daniel Ugalde, originally from Ecuador. His future is in the world of Real Estate. /Courtesy Baruch College

## **From football to finance**

Bianco Bambaren's story is another example of how barriers can be broken and a promising future can be achieved.

They immigrated from Peru to the United States with their mother and younger brother, Bianco was 17 years old, and they initially settled in Queens. He too will graduate at the end of May with a degree in Finance and Business Administration.

"I was about to sign the contract to play in the reserves of a professional soccer team in Peru and initially it was difficult to make the decision to come," says Bianco, who has been playing soccer since he was 5 years old and his dream was always to debut in the first division. division of that sport.

"I decided to come with my mom and be together as a family. That was what mainly inspired me, and now I don't regret it at all", says this young man who first completed his Associate's degree in Business Administration and Management at Queensborough Community College (QCC) and then transferred to Baruch College.

He remembers that one day, while he was in his last year of high school in a Jamaican school, he was playing soccer in a park and the QCC coach had been watching him...

“He approached me to tell me that he wanted to try me out for the team. I went to the 'trayouts' and he liked the way I played and that's how my career at a university began”.

He played for QCC during the two years he studied there and is currently a midfielder/defender for the Baruch Bearcats.

“Being a player motivated me to keep good grades and be disciplined. My inclusion in the university team is an additional incentive”, acknowledges Bianco.

He currently works for Playbook Sports, in the marketing and software development division. He is also doing an internship at the non-profit organization Masa.

“I always wanted to be part of such an entity and in some way reverse the help I received to start a new life in this country,” says Bianco, whose goal as a professional is to dedicate himself to sports management.

“My dream is to become a professional soccer agent since I have seen many injustices, such as not being allowed to play because you don't have money. I want to change that by helping players who don't have the resources to have a career in Peru and here in the United States.”

Bianco's idea is to give the Peruvian players facilities, just as he had them. His focus will be to work so that they can come on a sports scholarship or as professional players.

"Everything happens for a reason, let's trust God, although there is time for everything, the first thing is to grow as a person, aspire for the family and yourself to break the chains to improve our quality of life and the family environment."

Finally, Bianco advises young people not to give up, waste time and set goals.



The Peruvian Bianco Bambaren, will seek to be a professional soccer agent with his degree in Finance.  
/Nadia Gomez

## Support for minority students

Many of Baruch College's students come from minority communities and benefit from the Search for Education, Elevation and Knowledge (SEEK) program in the City University of New York (CUNY) system.

Baruch College's emphasis on promoting the advancement of minority students is reflected in the graduation rate over the past six years. While the national graduation rate for Latino students is 37.1 percent, the rate in Baruch is more than 60 percent.

“Baruch College applauds the impressive achievements and academic successes of Carolina, Daniel, and Bianco, who embody the positive spirit, ambition, and exceptional talents of the Class of 2023,” said Baruch College President S. David Wu.

According to Wu, the stories of these students reflect the incredible diversity of the student population at that university, where 168 countries are represented and more than 110 languages are spoken.

“At Baruch, we believe that affordable and equitable access to excellent education for people of all backgrounds brings immense value to our society,” added the academic.

In that sense, SEEK's mission is to provide access to university to students who would not otherwise be able to obtain a university education due to financial and academic circumstances.

Baruch College leads the SEEK program at CUNY in achieving results, including high retention, graduation rates, and social mobility. The program supports students by providing intensive academic advising and guidance to navigate the transition to college, academic requirements, and any personal issues that stand between students and their educational goals.

Through SEEK, students are eligible for two additional semesters of tuition assistance and book stipends each semester. In addition, to academic support services such as tutoring, writing consultations and access to learning communities in business law, economics, communications and mathematics.



S. David Wu, President of Baruch College. /Courtesy Baruch College

## **Almost 20,000 students**

The university was established in 1919, named after businessman and statesman Bernard M. Baruch. It operates undergraduate and graduate programs through the Zicklin School of Business, the Weissman School of Arts and Sciences, and the Marxe School of International and Public Affairs. It has 19,740 students and is located in Midtown Manhattan.

Website: [baruch.cuny.edu](http://baruch.cuny.edu)