



2025 GREAT GRADS

The City College
of New York





Meet some of the most talented and motivated students from The City College of New York's Class of 2025.

Nominated by their CCNY mentors, and representative of all schools and divisions of the College, the students chosen as Great Grads excel in the classroom, inspire us with their personal histories, and illustrate the transformative power of the City experience.

Each Great Grad has done more than just attain high grades. Many have overcome obstacles that have not deterred them from their determination to attain a college education. Each Great Grad exemplifies the College's continuing mission of ensuring that people from all walks of life will have access to a college dedicated to the idea that a democratic society begins with educational opportunity for the whole people.

This past academic year called into question long-held notions of what constitutes such a democratic society. College campuses across the country roiled by protests and the academic community being under attack by the highest reaches of our government are among the challenges these Great Grads confronted in the course of their academic journeys. How they respond to these challenges as they embark upon the next chapter of their lives -- as healers, educators, researchers, policymakers, entrepreneurs and more -- will test their resilience, their fortitude, and their commitment to doing remarkable things as graduates of The City College of New York.



“CCNY has provided me with an incredible, affordable education and pushed me to grow in ways I never imagined. I’ve been challenged, supported and given the tools to thrive.”

KAZI AKTER

BA, INTERDISCIPLINARY ARTS AND SCIENCE, MINOR IN PHILOSOPHY
DIVISION OF INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES AT THE CENTER FOR WORKER EDUCATION

Brooklyn native Kazi Akter encountered obstacles in high school on her way to graduation and questioned if school was the right path for her to take. Although she struggled with self-doubt about continuing her educational journey, she refused to give up and found her way to The City College of New York.

“As a Bangladeshi-American and first-generation college student, I am proud to be a trailblazer and the first in my family to graduate from a traditional four-year college,” said the 23-year-old Brooklyn High School of the Arts graduate.

She was able to find her passion for learning again through the Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences program at CWE. It not only provided her with a flexible education, since she worked, but satisfied her need for a well-rounded program with an array of subjects to choose from.

“CCNY has provided me with an incredible, affordable education and pushed me to grow in ways I never imagined,” said Akter, who is passionate about social justice and community empowerment. “Here, I’ve been challenged, supported and given the tools to thrive.”

Akter maintained a 3.9 GPA while balancing her job and being a student mentor. She is involved in the MSO/WII club (Muslim Student Organization and Women in Islam) and was awarded the CUNY-NYCHA Scholarship, S Jay Levy Scholarship and Social Justice Prize from CWE.

After graduation, she will continue working at the Brooklyn Public Library while applying for graduate school to become a philosophy professor one day.



“I have worked tirelessly to prove that barriers do not define one’s future, but determination does. My journey is a testament to the power of ‘keep going,’ and I hope to inspire other young people like myself to push forward, no matter the challenges they face.”

MIGUEL ARIAS

BA, POLITICAL SCIENCE, MINOR IN LEGAL STUDIES AND JEWISH STUDIES

COLIN POWELL SCHOOL FOR CIVIC AND GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

SEEK SCHOLAR

When Miguel Arias came to the U.S. from the Dominican Republic, he knew that the path ahead would be challenging as he learned a new language and acclimated to a new environment. He was determined to overcome these obstacles by staying after school for tutoring while engaging with his peers.

After high school, he entered The City College of New York at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, which proved difficult. Although there were times when he thought he did not want to continue, a suggestion from his SEEK advisor to obtain an internship for a Manhattan District Attorney candidate solidified his dreams of pursuing a career in political science.

He was elected vice president of academic affairs for the Undergraduate Student Government and is president of the Dominican Student

Association. He was awarded a study abroad scholarship in Argentina, received the Frederick Douglass Leadership Award from the Black Male Initiative, and received a Youth Leadership Award from the Dominican Republic Consulate.

After graduation, he hopes to deepen his commitment to public service and supporting the immigrant community by pursuing a full-time position at the Office of the Brooklyn Borough President, where he currently works as a constituent services liaison.

“I have worked tirelessly to prove that barriers do not define one’s future, but determination does,” said Arias. “My journey is a testament to the power of ‘keep going,’ and I hope to inspire other young people like myself to push forward, no matter the challenges they face.”



“The faculty and my peers at CCNY fostered an environment that encouraged curiosity and ambition, pushing me to set higher goals for myself.”

SARA AVRAHAM

BE, CHEMICAL ENGINEERING
THE GROVE SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING

Sara Avraham journeyed to New York City from Israel at age 14 to receive specialized medical treatment for a rare disease. To distract herself from her illness, she took online courses at Kahn Academy, where she excelled in math, science and English.

Once her medical condition improved, she was able to enroll at Touro University, where she took courses in calculus, chemistry and physics, igniting her passion for chemical engineering as she earned her high school equivalency.

At CCNY, she researched electrochemical systems and battery recycling in Associate Professor of Chemical Engineering Robert Messinger’s Lab, NASA-CCNY Center for Advance Batteries for Space, which led to her first-place wins at the American Institute of Chemical Engineers’ 2024 regional and annual student conferences.

“Throughout my time in Messinger’s lab, I gained not only technical knowledge but also the confidence to take initiative and navigate challenges independently,” said the 21-year-old Brooklyn resident. “The faculty and my peers at CCNY fostered an environment that encouraged curiosity and ambition, pushing me to set higher goals for myself.”

For the past two years, Avraham received the Martin B. Sherwin Scholarship, which paid her full tuition. She was the 2024 president and 2025 vice president of Tau Beta Pi, the oldest engineering honor society.

At graduation, she received the Patel Award for Academic Excellence in Chemical Engineering. She will pursue a Ph.D. in chemical engineering at UC Santa Barbara, continuing her research interests in energy and sustainability.



“I’m thankful to have the opportunity to attend CCNY in Harlem. It’s the backdrop of my conscience; a cultural tapestry rich with diversity.”

MOUHAMADOU M DIENG

B ARCH, ARCHITECTURE
BERNARD AND ANNE SPITZER SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

Mouhamadou Dieng’s parents immigrated to New York from Senegal. Born and bred in Harlem, Dieng is thankful to have attended CCNY in his hometown, a place he describes as the backdrop of his conscience.

As a B Arch student, Dieng won the 2024 Recipe for a Room competition, hosted by the AIANY Interiors Committee. The model-making contest—about building spatial, sculptural, miniature rooms—benefits a non-profit organization supporting newly arrived immigrant children and families. Dieng won in the Audience Favorite category for his project “METROSOFT,” which was in collaboration with Nicole Vlado Torres, fellow for Design Trust for Public Space.

Dieng’s favorite memories of CCNY included working on the built project “Generative Histories Harlem” and other Spitzer wall exhibits. Dieng spoke at the ARCH@60

Symposium and completed research under an ORCA grant. In 2023, as part of Assistant Professor of Architecture Jerome Haferd’s Advanced Studio, Dieng presented “Regrounding Harlem” to the Caribbean Cultural Center Africa and Diaspora Institute. The positive response he received was meaningful, and proved pivotal for Dieng, as it was from individuals actively engaged in the contentious Harlem African Burial Ground issue. This experience proved that he wanted to engage the people who live in the actual spaces designed by architects.

Studying at CCNY, Dieng realized that design is a living political agent. He was mentored by Haferd, whom he greatly admires. After graduation, he plans to continue his education and research at the graduate level, and to become a licensed architect who always considers architecture as an agent of change.



“I hope to carry forward a legacy of excellence and impact inspired by my experience at CCNY. The school is a true testament that there is no limit but the one we draw for ourselves.”

IBRAHIMA FALL

BE, CIVIL ENGINEERING
THE GROVE SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING

After arriving in Harlem from Senegal, Ibrahima Fall enrolled at The City College of New York to study English as a Second Language. As a first-generation college student, Fall worked at Whole Foods to support himself while practicing English with customers and colleagues.

“Growing up in Senegal, I had witnessed how inadequate infrastructure hindered economic growth and daily life,” said Fall. “This experience ignited my passion for civil engineering and my determination to be part of the solution.”

At first, breaking into the field of civil engineering proved difficult, but through the CUNY Career Launch program, Fall had his first internship at SRAA+E, and later, his second in structural engineering at Hardesty & Hanover through CCNY’s Career Fair.

As he continued his studies,

he found his voice as a leader when he became president of the American Society of Civil Engineers student chapter. Through the Transportation Research Board Fellowship Program, he worked with Professor of Civil Engineering Naresh Devineni, researching the effects of climate change on the reliability of highway bridges.

Fall was also a Dwight David Eisenhower Transportation Fellow and won numerous scholarships. After graduation, he plans to pursue a master’s degree while obtaining his Professional Engineer license. He dreams of one day owning a construction firm in Senegal that improves infrastructure and fosters sustainable development.

“I hope to carry forward a legacy of excellence and impact inspired by my experience at CCNY,” said Fall. “The school is a true testament that there is no limit but the one we draw for ourselves.”



“I’ve really enjoyed being in a small graduate program with classmates with such an interesting and diverse set of experiences and backgrounds, all of whom are really into learning, but also into laughing.”

DANIEL KATCH

MA, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY
DIVISION OF HUMANITIES AND THE ARTS

New York City native Daniel Katch was born to two CCNY alumni who met at the College, his mother an education major and his father an English major, both Class of 1969. CCNY provided his parents with the opportunity to attend college.

Katch attended Brown University for his BA. However, decades later, he determined that it was no longer tenable to earn a living in his chosen profession as a journalist. Post-pandemic, he chose to retrain at CCNY. As a mature non-traditional student, he enrolled in the English Department’s MA program in Language and Literacy, and was consistently singled out as one of the most talented and dedicated students in his class. His teachers knew him as someone who engaged his community and sought to make changes that benefited all.

Katch stressed that community was his favorite dimension of CCNY, and that his colleagues

were “into learning but also into laughing.” Through the First-Year Writing Program, Katch learned to teach courses such as English 110 and 210. He was selected to design and teach new courses in the English Department, a testament to his innovative approach to teaching. He received the Marilyn Sterngrass Writing Award.

He credited M.A. Language and Literacy Program Director Barbara Gleason and Missy Watson, director of the First-Year Writing Program and his mentor, as having influenced him heavily. He had never experienced such comprehensive mentoring during his undergraduate education. He described his teachers as role models, respected scholars and devoted educators. Upon graduation, the Jackson Heights resident plans to teach composition and grammar at CCNY, as well as at other CUNY schools.



“My academic journey has been defined by perseverance, growth, and self-discovery.”

GURSIMRAN KAUR

BS, APPLIED MATHEMATICS
DIVISION OF SCIENCE

Gursimran Kaur’s journey is the quintessential tale of generations of CCNY graduates. The Indian immigrant, who was 15 when she arrived in the U.S. in 2018, was the first in her family to attend college. She leaves CCNY with a BS in applied mathematics. Her honors include the BNY Mellon Scholarship, The City College of New York STEM Institute’s “Mentor of the Year Award,” and induction into the National Society of Leadership and Success. Kaur was also on the Dean’s List.

The young immigrant first had to master English on arrival. She did that by making friends and speaking with them regularly to hone her communication skills. She also perfected her English tremendously by reading and writing widely. The sum total was developing the confidence needed to communicate with both her professors and peers in her academic quest.

“My academic journey has

been defined by perseverance, growth, and self-discovery,” said Kaur. “Adjusting to a new country and navigating an unfamiliar education system while balancing academic and personal responsibilities wasn’t easy. But with every challenge, I gained strength, resilience, and purpose. These experiences became the foundation of everything I’ve achieved.”

An important college diploma earned seven years into her American experience, what is next for Kaur? The oldest of three siblings, she’s decided to put graduate school on the backburner while she works to pay her parents back by helping to support her family. “I want a job where I can apply math to things that can make a difference in somebody’s life,” she said. Options include corporate finance, accounting, and data analytics.



“I, proudly planted at the crossroads of these three communities as a Black Jewish woman, was certain that City College was where I would flourish, and my instincts were not wrong.”

TYUH MANNING

BA, ART HISTORY AND JEWISH STUDIES
 DIVISION OF HUMANITIES AND THE ARTS

Tyuh Manning knew she needed a special community to enable her to flourish during college. She chose CCNY because she was impressed by its legacies of inclusion and representation, values important to her as an Afro-Caribbean Jewish woman. The Brooklyn resident is now graduating magna cum laude, and is grateful for her four years at the College.

A double major in Art History and Jewish Studies, Manning attended her first semester virtually from Barbados during the pandemic. Despite the distance, she became a member of an online community of her fellow students. In her sophomore year, she received an S Jay Levy Fellowship for Future Leaders, which led to an internship at the Center for Jewish History. In 2023, she graduated from the Fellowship program as co-valedictorian. The following summer, she interned at the Jewish Museum.

As part of the internship, she published a zine entitled, “Draw What You See: Caribbean-Jewish Perspectives,” about six Caribbean artists with Jewish heritage who contributed to the pantheon of Caribbean art.

Manning credits CCNY with improving her skills as an artist by emphasizing the importance of studio classes. This ignited her interest in both ceramics and analog photography. She spent her last semester in CCNY’s darkroom facilities, developing her own negatives and making prints of her photographs.

After graduation, Manning would like to work in a museum or cultural organization before pursuing graduate studies in art history. She has the support of professors such as Shani Greenstein of the Michael and Irene Ross Program in Jewish Studies, who inspired Manning to pursue as much knowledge as she can.



“To be able to bring that experience to the table, having lived the experience of what really happened, is a privilege for me.”

LOUIS MUAMBA

BA, INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
THE COLIN POWELL SCHOOL FOR CIVIC AND GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

The memories of growing up in war-torn Democratic Republic of Congo are so seared into Louis Muamba’s psyche that he has trouble talking about it today. But, rather than wallow in anger, he chose to put his traumatic experiences to work in the service of peace and conciliation.

The DRC of the late 1990s was consumed by a multi-sided civil war involving Rwanda, Uganda, the regime’s military forces, and rebel militia groups that recruited pre-adolescent boys as soldiers. Muamba remembers being surrounded and menaced by a group of child soldiers outside Kinshasa one day while searching for potable water with his father.

The family resettled in Mexico at the invitation of an uncle, who was a priest. Muamba grew up as the only Black person in the school. “It was interesting to be the center of attention,” he said.

Already fluent in French, Lingala and Tshibula, he learned

Spanish, then emigrated to the US, learning English, earning a certificate in interpretation and translation at Hunter College and an associate’s degree in international studies at LaGuardia Community College.

Hearing the call of public service, he entered CCNY, focusing on negotiation and conflict resolution, which he will study as a graduate student at Columbia University in the fall.

“It’s a duty because it’s by miracle and by grace that we left [the DRC],” he said. “To be able to bring that experience to the table, having lived the experience of what really happened, is a privilege for me, knowing that I’m doing something about it instead of just enjoying the privilege of freedom and being able just to live a normal life like everyone else.”

“CCNY helped me to set up my path.”



“I really learned to explore my curiosity through research and hands-on learning.”

BARBARA NOEL

MS, EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Five years after Barbara Noel started her professional life as a telco client support specialist, she determined that career path wasn't right for her; she longed to work with young children.

“I was running away from it,” she said, referring to her passion. “Money isn't everything.”

She started over again, first as a nanny, then as a volunteer at her Brooklyn church, before landing a job as an assistant teacher at a Manhattan branch of a national chain of backup daycare centers. She soon discovered that she lacked experience in managing a classroom with a 1:5 teacher to child ratio and in implementing developmentally appropriate practices. Not getting the guidance she needed, she set out to earn her Child Development Associate certification, focusing on infants and toddlers.

“The CDA programs equipped me with essential skills to support children's emotional, social, intellectual, and physical

development,” she said. She was soon promoted to lead toddler teacher, giving her the spark to apply for the master's degree in early childhood education at CCNY.

Noel cited Doctoral Lecturer Nancy Cardwell for teaching her how to teach science to children, and Adjunct Assistant Professor Rory Scott for teaching her about family engagement and how to establish a childcare center—something that she ultimately aspires to do—as her main influences.

“I really learned to explore my curiosity through research and hands-on learning,” she said. “The professors want to see you grow and succeed, but you must be willing to help yourself as well.”

After completing her student teaching requirements as at Bank Street Head Start, Noel will return to her daycare job as she plots her next career move.



“Education is the pathway from darkness to light.”

ALANIS OMAR

BA, POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
THE COLIN POWELL SCHOOL FOR CIVIC AND GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

Alanis Omar’s mother, an immigrant from Trinidad and Tobago, always emphasized the importance of education as the key to a better life. “Education is power, girl power,” she would tell her daughter.

Young Alanis discovered her interest in advocacy at the local YMCA, sparked by her involvement with the Y’s youth development programs. “Blossoming from that pathway and, later on, as I reached high school and was thinking about my college career and what I wanted to study, that spearheaded my way to making my voice heard,” she said. She found CCNY as the place to pursue that ambition.

“The Colin Powell School spoke to me because it had a semester in D.C.,” she said. “That really drew me to the program.” She spent the semester as one of 30 student interns handling constituent concerns for U.S. Senate Majority Leader Charles E. Schumer

(D-N.Y.).

Omar studied abroad in Jordan, the Netherlands and South Korea, learning Mandarin along the way. She interned with a New York City Council member, a global strategic advisory firm, and the Harris-Walz presidential campaign. She has been a YMCA ambassador, a BRAVEN ambassador, a CUNY peer leader, and a Colin Powell School student success guide.

Omar graduated with a 3.68 GPA and four minors: public policy, journalism, management and administration, and Asian studies. She begins her master’s degree at Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs in the fall, with the goal of becoming a U.S. foreign service officer.

“Education is the pathway from darkness to light,” she said, quoting philosopher and classicist Allan Bloom – but echoing her mother.



“Every child learns differently. You meet them where they are.”

KATHERINE PEREZ

MS, EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

The daughter of Nicaraguan immigrants, Katherine Perez grew up in Washington Heights with her family. Her hardworking mother was dedicated to providing her daughters with a good education.

Young Katherine struggled with social emotional development issues as a child until her fourth-grade teacher “completely changed my life,” she said, by reassuring her of her worth and by showing her compassion. “It was at that point that I knew I wanted to be a teacher just like her.”

After majoring in childhood studies at CCNY’s Center for Worker Education, she resolved that teaching was the “best way” to make an impact in the life of children. Katherine taught at an early childhood center in a local community college for eight years before joining a nationwide

early childcare center, where she has worked for the past seven years.

With her focus on children’s social emotional development, Perez rejects the rigid approach taken by some educators. “Every child learns differently,” she said. “You meet them where they are.”

It is a core philosophy that Perez carries with her as she considers her future plans.

“There has always been a huge debate about, do I want to be a teacher and change children’s lives, or do I want to be an administrator and teach other teachers?” she said. “It’s like the ripple in the pond that keeps expanding. I want to dive into the classrooms to get to know my teachers, children and families better. Being able to create the ripple gives me the best of both worlds.”



“I found I had a love for storytelling and being a voice for marginalized communities.”

KATELYN POLANCO

BA, COMMUNICATIONS

DIVISION OF HUMANITIES AND THE ARTS

Born in the South Bronx, first-generation Dominican American Katelyn Polanco often felt that the odds were stacked against her. When her parents emigrated from the Dominican Republic to the U.S., they had to work immediately, preventing them from continuing their education past elementary school.

Growing up in a low-income household, Polanco saw the challenges her parents faced firsthand, but they instilled in her the drive to reach beyond their own limits. That drive has shaped her. She knew she had to “be the change;” not just for herself and her family, but for girls on a similar journey who share her dreams. Once at CCNY, in the Advertising and Public Relations program, “I found I had a love for storytelling and being a voice for marginalized communities.” She became managing editor of CCNY’s “Harlem View” and contributed to the CCNY Alumni Association magazine “ALUMNUS.”

As project manager for her

Advertising and Public Relations senior capstone course, Polanco led a team of six to create an integrated marketing communications plan for CCNY’s upcoming Gaming Pathways program.

One of Polanco’s most memorable experiences at CCNY was covering her first protest, which she did in her first semester. She wrote a powerful story about it that solidified her passion for journalism. Mentorship from Professor Barbara Nevins Taylor, director of the journalism program, and Adjunct Lecturer Lynne Scott Jackson was meaningful to her because “they would both remind me never to limit myself.”

When she was chosen out of 30,000 applicants to be one of 180 students awarded an internship at international cosmetics corporation L’Oréal, she had no way of knowing it would lead to a full-time role as a marketing management trainee upon graduation.



“The lessons I’ve learned at CCNY, combined with the relationships I have built, will guide me as I work toward my goal of building solutions that empower communities and improve lives.”

MUHAMMAD HASNAIN SHABBIR

BS, COMPUTER SCIENCE
GROVE SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING

Muhammad Hasnain Shabbir’s odyssey to CCNY, and toward a BS in computer science, began at age 11 when he left his native Pakistan. He’d spend the next two years in Malaysia, before his family sent him to Kenya at age 13 to further his education in a different environment. This early exposure to diverse environments shaped his resilience and deepened his appreciation for education as a means of transformation.

Seven years later, Shabbir arrived in New York to study mechanical engineering at Queensborough Community College. “But my innovative ambitions and the possibility of creating something from nothing led me to discover software development as a way to bring ideas to life,” he said. “This brought me to CCNY for computer science.”

At CCNY, Shabbir has won multiple competitions with the Zahn Innovation Center, and CUNY Startups, presenting his startup that helps small businesses in e-commerce.” He’s also served as a vice president of CCNY’s Pakistan Student Association. Among his academic accolades are the Alumni Scholarship, the SHPE Engineering Scholarship, the Grove School of Engineering Scholarship, and the Colin Powell Fellowship. He was also on the Dean’s List.

Shabbir’s next goal is achieving his dream of leading a startup that uses technology to solve real-world problems. “The lessons I’ve learned at CCNY, combined with the relationships I have built, will guide me as I work toward my goal of building solutions that empower communities and improve lives,” said the Harlem resident.



“My CCNY education has allowed me to transcend national boundaries to pursue pediatric brain tumor research amongst world leaders in pediatric oncology, transforming what my family and I deemed possible.”

ANDREW WILLIAMS

BS, PSYCHOLOGY

COLIN POWELL SCHOOL FOR CIVIC AND
GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

MACAULAY HONORS COLLEGE

CLASS OF 2025 SALUTATORIAN

Inspired by his mother’s belief in the power of education, Andrew Williams blazed a trail of student success at CCNY. Born in Queens of Jamaican immigrant parents, the Class of 2025 Salutatorian is a Macaulay Honors student graduating with a BS in psychology from the Colin Powell School. He completed his coursework with a 4.0 GPA. His other honors included: a four-year full-tuition merit scholarship to the Macaulay Honors College; the Peter F. Vallone Academic Scholarship; the City College Academy for Professional Preparation (CCAPP) Scholarship; the Associated Medical Schools of New York Scholarship; and the Jeannette K. Watson Fellowship. The latter award enabled Williams to spend three months in summer 2024 as a research intern at The Kids Research Institute Australia in Perth. There, he performed experiments with the Brain Tumor Research Laboratory.

“My CCNY education has

allowed me to transcend national boundaries to pursue pediatric brain tumor research amongst world leaders in pediatric oncology, transforming what my family and I deemed possible,” said Williams.

He’s also worked as a research assistant in CUNY Distinguished Professor Ruth E. Stark’s NMR spectroscopy lab at CCNY’s Center for Discovery and Innovation; as a biology and organic chemistry tutor in CCAPP; an Emergency Department volunteer at New York-Presbyterian Columbia; and as a scribe technician at CityMD in Jackson Heights.

The Queens resident plans on continuing his tutorship in biology and chemistry while applying for medical school. His message to the Class of 2025? “Let us be disruptors, builders, and challengers. Let our education be the fire that ignites change *ad astra per aspera!*”—the latter being Latin for “through adversity to the stars.”



“I am thankful for attending CCNY because most of my peers shared the same story as I did, they gave me the courage to keep going.”

EILYN ZUNIGA MARQUEZ

BA/MA, PSYCHOLOGY

COLIN POWELL SCHOOL FOR CIVIC AND GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

SEEK SCHOLAR

CLASS OF 2025 VALEDICTORIAN

Seven years after arriving from El Salvador in her teens, barely speaking English, Eilyn Zuniga Marquez heads CCNY’s second post-COVID-19-era graduating class as valedictorian. The pandemic, whose challenges were also shared by her peers, and immigration-related stress were just among the adversities Marquez encountered on her unrelenting march to dual BA/MA degrees in psychology that she completed with a 3.93 GPA. There was also culture shock, financial stress and the demands of navigating a new educational system.

“Despite those challenges, I have graduated,” said the Bronx resident, who took ESL classes before entering CCNY. She credits the SEEK program and the Colin Powell School Office of Student Success for helping her overcome her other adversities.

Marquez plans on using her BA/MA credentials, which meet New York state educational requirements for certification as

a substance use counselor, to help ameliorate mental health issues in the community. She interned with the RevCore Recovery Center. Her career goal is to eventually obtain a Ph.D. in clinical psychology but, more immediately, she accepted a Civil Service Pathways Fellowship from the New York City Department of Citywide Administrative Services.

“I am thankful for attending CCNY because most of my peers shared the same story as I did, they gave me the courage to keep going,” said Marquez. “As someone who believes that education is the key to true freedom and imagines a world where quality education is provided to everyone, I am grateful to have found it here.”

Marquez was on the Dean’s List and received the SEEK Sophomore of the Year Award, the Debra Kennedy Sterling Silver Award, and the Outstanding SEEK Graduate of the Year Award.



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