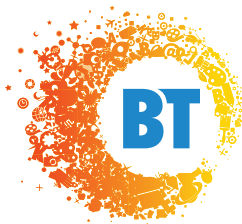


# 20 23 YEARBOOK

BREAKTHROUGH CENTRAL TEXAS

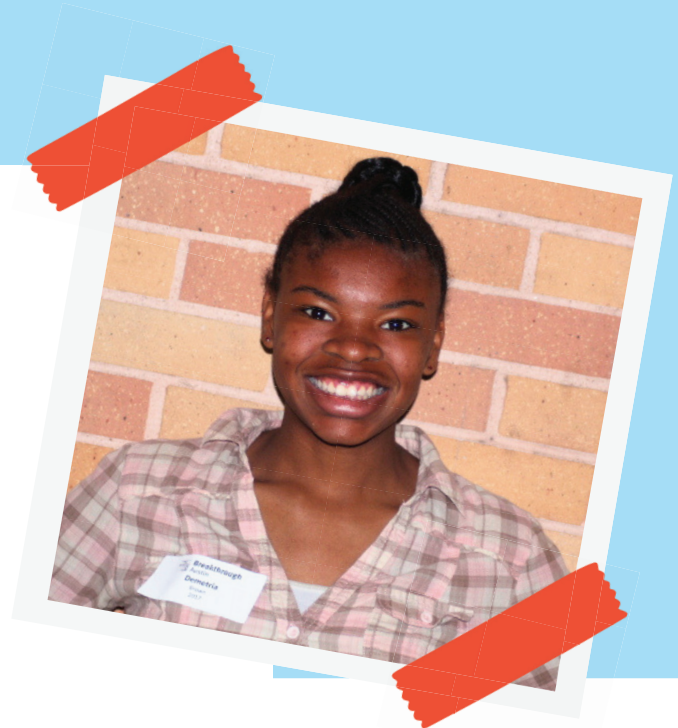


# Demetria **BROWN**



## **Huston- Tillotson University** Bachelor of Arts, Human Biology

After graduation, Demi began studying for her medical assistant certification. Her goal: to work in a doctor's office that focuses on women's health. Demi's Breakthrough journey is already having positive impacts on her entire family. Several of her siblings are now Breakthrough students, working toward their own postsecondary dreams and imagining what their futures can be.



**“** It feels amazing [to be a first-generation college graduate] because I am accomplishing being the first to have a degree and setting an example for my siblings that anything is possible. I would like to say thank you not only for being a mentor and pushing students to be great, [but also for] supporting them with whatever they want to do in their professional career.



# Lucita RODRIGUEZ



## St. Edward's University

Bachelor of Arts, Political Science  
Minor in Communications

Becoming the first college graduate in her family has given Lucita an overwhelming amount of joy and awe for all that she has accomplished. As an AmeriCorps Program & Advising Fellow with Breakthrough, she is already giving back to the community. Her next goal is to become the first in her family to attend and graduate from law school!



**My experience at Breakthrough throughout my**

**education journey has pushed me to where I am now. I have learned how to advocate for myself and others in my community. I would love to express my gratitude for the continued support I have received from all of the advisors, donors, and supporters. Without them, their knowledge and empowerment, I don't think I would have been able to make it through college and the many obstacles. I am extremely grateful for this opportunity and can proudly say that I have had one of the best support systems throughout the past 12 years of my life.**





# Elias Daniel **GARIBAY MEDRANO**



## **Texas A&M University**

Bachelor of Science, Industrial Engineering

Elias is using the knowledge he gained on his Breakthrough journey to inspire and mentor future first-generation college students, as a Breakthrough AmeriCorps Program & Advising Fellow. He is excited about entering a new phase in his life and is currently planning a move to Dallas to start a full-time role at Accenture next year. Elias is also preparing for his professional engineering exams with the ultimate goal of pursuing a master's degree in engineering.



**I take immense pride in being the first in my family to graduate from college. I feel deeply grateful for the supportive community of family, friends, and the Breakthrough community who have played a crucial role in paving the path to my success. My college journey was an emotional roller coaster full of doubts, insecurities, personal achievements, and new lifelong friendships. Looking back I understand that my time in college not only led up to academic success, but also personal growth that has shaped me into the person I am today. I wear my Aggie ring proudly as a symbol of the love, dedication, and effort my community has shown me throughout my journey.**





# Nyja HARRIS



## Huston-Tillotson University Bachelor of Arts, Psychology

The journey from middle schooler to first-generation college graduate was not an easy one, but Nyja is grateful that her persistence is leading her family into a more stable and secure future. She is planning to pursue a career in social work.



Breakthrough really made it so I could never give up on my college goals! There were SO many times I could've stopped going to school for good reasons, but Breakthrough always stepped up with the resources to help me through it all. When I was admitted to [college], I was mostly excited to be independent and move into the dorms! Working AND going to school was a sincere challenge. [But], I got my first internship at Horizon Bank with the help of Breakthrough, that helped me save up money to buy my first car all in cash. I was [even] able to move out from the dorms and into my first apartment! I then interned with UFCU Bank and the Wildflower Center and worked enough to help pay my tuition across my 4 years. THANK YOU!! From the bottom of my heart. I know I was an annoying, tough kid to work with, but I'm so glad y'all never gave up on me. I love y'all!



# Naomi Rae **PADILLA**



## **Texas State University**

Bachelor of Arts, Computer Science  
Minor in Mathematics

Naomi Rae's Breakthrough journey began in sixth grade and continued through her extended time in college as she managed her responsibilities as a new parent and as a college student. Despite the many challenges, she was determined to be the first in her family to graduate from college. Today, she is a Systems Support Specialist for Texas Comptroller of Public Account. Naomi Rae is working toward another big life goal — purchasing her first home by summer of 2025!

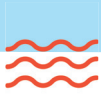


**Breakthrough has been my biggest cheerleader before I even started believing in myself. It felt amazing accomplishing a goal that I've had since I was in 6th grade. There were times I felt discouraged to register for classes because of how long I had been in school. But after six and a half years and a baby, I'm proud to say I'm a Texas State Graduate.**





# Da'Keondrick WHITLEY



## **The University of Texas at Austin** Bachelor of Science, Electrical Engineering

Da'Keondrick is currently a Network Model Engineer with ERCOT. His focus is on building a technical career where he can design user-friendly products while enjoying creative control to ensure the development of practical yet innovative solutions. Driven by a desire for continued growth and his family's shared values of education and academic success, Da'Keondrick is considering a master's degree in the future.



**Becoming a first-generation college graduate feels incredibly fulfilling. It's not just a personal achievement but a source of motivation for my siblings and me. Breakthrough has played a pivotal role in empowering my family throughout our educational journey. My mom, unfamiliar with the college process, gained confidence and navigational skills through Breakthrough's support. Breakthrough stepped in when I needed support the most. For students and families unsure about navigating college, this program is perfect—it made my journey stress-free, guiding me through high school and college. To donors, please continue investing in this program that has been instrumental for me and my siblings. Your ongoing support is deeply appreciated.**





# Andrea **SANCHEZ**



## **The University of Texas at Austin** Bachelor of Science, Advertising

Andrea is currently working as a Promotions Producer for CBS Austin News. She hopes to grow in this field and one day become a creative director or product marketing manager for a big agency or company.



**Being a first-generation college graduate feels like such an accomplishment. Career opportunities multiply, and financial success for my family becomes much more attainable. I had to work a little harder than those who weren't in that position, but it was all the better as it made me more resilient and resourceful. Without Breakthrough, I still believe I would've ended up going to college (as it was always a goal of mine), but the process would've been frustrating and I definitely wouldn't have come this far as quickly.**



# Prince UMANMIELEN



## Tarleton State University Bachelor of Science, Kinesiology

While pursuing his undergraduate degree, Prince was a defensive lineman for the NCAA Division 1 football team at Tarleton State University. He continues to pursue his academic and athletic goals at East Central University where he is working on a master's in sports administration. Prince aspires to continue playing football in the NFL, while also pursuing his wide range of ambitions as an artist and a trader in the foreign exchange market.



**[Breakthrough] helped me a lot.**

**From field trips, to staying educated, to learning more about different colleges and really starting to think professionally – not only about school, but life afterwards as well. I thank every single one of you for your support and ongoing love you always send to me and my family. From day one it has been nothing but kindness and a family environment. It took me growing up, but once I did, I truly came to appreciate all you have done.**





# Jeyner CANACA LARA



## Huston-Tillotson University Bachelor of Arts, Business Administration

Jeyner's journey to become the first person in his entire family to graduate from college was not an easy or linear path. His success was built on the hopes and dreams of his mother, who emigrated from Honduras in hopes of a better life for her son. Today, Jeyner is giving back to his community as an AmeriCorps Program & Advising Fellow at Breakthrough. He plans to pursue a MBA, get a stockbroker's license, and establish a real estate development company.



**I am proud to say that Breakthrough has transformed my life. Their summer programs fostered a sense of belonging, tutoring provided valuable academic support, and their guidance in the college application process was truly remarkable. I know that many of my fellow students share a similar experience, and we are fortunate to be part of a community that values and uplifts first-generation students. As a first-generation college graduate, I reflect on my mother's journey from Honduras when I was just three years old. Her dream was to see me graduate from high school, attend college, and earn a bachelor's degree. And I can proudly say that I am the first in my entire family to graduate from college. Being the first to graduate from college carries immense significance, as it allows me to reshape the trajectory of my family's future.**





# Jessica ROMERO



## University of Texas at San Antonio

Bachelor of Arts, Psychology

After completing her undergraduate degree, Jessica immediately set her sights on graduate school. She is currently pursuing a master's degree in social work (MSW) at the University of Texas at San Antonio, with a target graduation date of 2026.



The feeling [of becoming a first-generation college graduate] is surreal. I am beyond fortunate and blessed to be able to experience something so out of reach for my family. Breakthrough has guided me through every step of the way. All of the advisors I've had have been amazing in supporting me and making sure I knew I had them to lean on. Special shoutout to Maya for providing a shoulder to lean on when I was graduating undergrad and transitioning into grad school. Breakthrough is an amazing organization that I am forever grateful for. You are doing amazing work, and I hope it is not going unnoticed.



# #BREAKTHROUGHGRADUATES

