



**20
24**

YEARBOOK

BREAKTHROUGH CENTRAL TEXAS



Ricky Lefranc Pierantozzi

St. Edward's University
Bachelor of Arts, Ethics and Leadership

Congratulations to the Class of 2024!

This special group of 87 first-generation college graduates are defined by their extraordinary resilience and tenacity. They persevered through a global pandemic and the transition to and from remote learning, yet never wavered in their resolve to complete a degree that was meaningful to them and to their futures.

While we see many choose careers in traditional helping professions, in a range of healthcare and teaching roles - others are pursuing careers and vocations as wide ranging as entrepreneurial business, engineering, and sports broadcasting. Whatever the future holds, we know these Breakthrough graduates will continue to inspire. We can't wait to see what the future holds for this extraordinary group of first-generation college graduates!

**Class of 2024 includes students that graduated in the Fall of 2023 through Spring of 2024.*



Samantha Arriaga

[Becoming a first-generation college graduate] was one of the most challenging and yet rewarding achievements of my life. I've always strived to set a good example for my daughter and I truly believe I've accomplished that. Breakthrough is an irreplaceable program that has helped so many people such as myself, who grew up not knowing how they were going to get to college. But they guided me through all the trials and tribulations and ultimately helped me graduate with my bachelor's and master's degrees.

**Texas A&M University, Corpus Christi
Master of Business Administration**

Armed with her MBA, Samantha plans to explore her true passions and become an entrepreneur by starting her own business. She feels strongly that Breakthrough provided the guidance she needed, when she needed it, at all parts of her journey to obtain an undergraduate and now a master's degree! She credits Breakthrough for helping her to never give up on her dreams and for being a trusted support system for her and other aspiring first-generation college students.

E'Maurai Glass

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The journey [to becoming a first-generation college graduate] was filled with numerous challenges and obstacles, but the sense of accomplishment and pride in achieving this milestone makes all the hard work and perseverance worthwhile. It feels both exhilarating and overwhelming to have reached this significant milestone, knowing that I have paved the way for future generations in my family.

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University of Texas at San Antonio Bachelor of Science, Kinesiology

Since graduating, E'Maurai has been working as a full-time substitute teacher while working toward his teaching certification. His Breakthrough journey to become the first in his family to graduate from college began in the summer before his sixth grade year. While attending Breakthrough Middle School Summer Academy, he first discovered the value of perseverance, accountability, and organization. As he continued with Breakthrough from middle school through college, he enjoyed being part of a community that felt in many ways like a second family.





Chad Miller

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It’s a surreal experience [to have graduated college]. Even now I forget that I don’t have to go to class or have homework. This has become my highest achievement, and I couldn’t be more proud of myself. I literally would not have made it through college if it wasn’t for the support from Breakthrough.
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**Angelo State University
Bachelor of Arts, Communication**

Chad plans to pursue a master’s degree as he works in sports information and broadcasting. He credits his steadfast Breakthrough support system - his advisors who watched him grow from a young boy to the man he is today - for changing his life for the better and enabling him to become the first in his family to graduate from college.



Mayra Parra Chavez

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My journey with Breakthrough has empowered me to embrace my educational path with newfound confidence and skills, unlocking a world of opportunities. I want to express my heartfelt gratitude for the unwavering support and guidance I received, especially from Jennifer Rivera, my Breakthrough advisor since middle school. She stayed with me every step of the way until I achieved my degree. To the students and parents, know that Breakthrough is here to lighten your journey and enhance your school and college experience. To the generous donors and supporters, thank you for your commitment to this program and for empowering first-generation students and families to reach their dreams.
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Southern New Hampshire University Bachelor of Arts, Healthcare Management

Mayra plans to continue working in Federally Qualified Healthcare Centers (FQHC), which provide medical services to underserved communities. As a full-time working mom and student, Mayra credits the unwavering support of her Breakthrough team for helping her to find her true passion and to pursue her dreams. Finding the right school was a critical part of helping her to balance a full-time job, motherhood and her studies. She believes her education will enable her to build a career that will lead to greater financial stability for her and her family.



Alice Timugura



As someone who has faced imposter syndrome and feeling as though they aren't good enough, I am glad I graduated college in a timely manner and have achieved so much. I gained so many experiences, many of which are due to Breakthrough's support. I am blessed to have learned so much during my four years at UT! Breakthrough has given me the tools I need to succeed, and I have high hopes for my academic and career journey!



**The University of Texas at Austin
Bachelor of Science and Arts, Biology
Certificates in Social Inequality, Health
& Policy, Forensic Science, and Pre-
Health Professions**

Alice plans to attend medical school to become a physician! She is also interested in research and would like to build on her skills by working on new research projects. In addition to her family, Alice credits Breakthrough's support in and out of the classroom, including help with applications, internships, academic advice, and professional development. The confidence gained from all of these activities propelled her even further as she was able to complete an undergraduate thesis and graduate with special departmental honors.



Kelita Aleman

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I am so proud of myself. Breakthrough helped me a lot through middle school and high school. I went to college because of their support.

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Prairie View A&M University Bachelor of Science, Biology

Kelita plans to further her education by attending Physician Assistant (PA) school, a specialized medical training program that will prepare her for a career as a PA. Upon completion, she will earn a Master of Physician Assistant Studies degree. She credits her postsecondary success to her time with Breakthrough beginning in middle school. Without Breakthrough she feels that college would not have been a part of her future as it was something she and her family knew very little about.





Ariana Burgos

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Being honest, life is hard. It gets better when you figure out how to live and maintain a good lifestyle. I want to thank all of Breakthrough for being there for me. Being that support system outside of my family is amazing. I've made plenty of friends, and I've learned how to be there for others. It's helped me get to where I am today.

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**Austin Community College
Associate Degree, General Studies in Liberal Arts**

In high school, Ariana earned an Associate Degree. She is now attending Texas Tech University, pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Animal Science. She hopes to continue her education with a master's degree and apply to veterinary school in the future. Ariana credits Breakthrough for helping her build confidence, connect with others, and achieve her goals.

Bryan Rangel

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Becoming the first in my family to graduate is a moment of tremendous celebration not only for myself but for those around me that made so many sacrifices. I feel pride from knowing that I've made others proud of me. Breakthrough opened doors for me that enabled me to pursue the best possible education both in high school and college. As a result, I've embarked on a professional path that much too often is not carved or followed by people that look like me.

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**The University of Texas at Austin
Bachelor of Business Administration,
Finance and Investment Management**

Bryan is putting his practical knowledge and skills garnered at the McCombs School of Business to work in accounting in the fast-paced real estate industry. Because of his personal journey, Bryan knows the transformative impact of higher education on the lives of students and their families - creating ripple effects that are beyond measure.







Grad Fest

Breakthrough's annual graduation event celebrating our students who have earned a bachelor's degree, associate degree, license or certification

This year, Breakthrough celebrated 87 new graduates and reached a new milestone—more than 350 first-generation college graduates since 2002, with nearly 3,500 more students following in their footsteps toward postsecondary success.







SEE MORE FROM OUR 2024 GRADS



Scan the QR code to see four Breakthrough students reveal their caps and gowns to their families for the first time ahead of their graduation.

