

Berkeley College graduates take center stage as they enter the workplace

Students with a wide range of backgrounds in the Class of 2019 are now entering a variety of jobs

The tassels were turned and the individually decorated caps tossed into the air mixed with confetti as the 2019 Berkeley College graduates who were awarded Certificates, Associate's, Bachelor's and Master's degrees exited from the Commencement ceremony held on May 10 at Prudential Center in Newark. With unemployment at an all-time-low, are their chances for success increased?

"Every one of us at the Berkeley College Commencement ceremony shares the pride of these graduates because we know the difference a college degree will make in their futures, and how the upward mobility of these graduates will impact future generations," said Michael J. Smith, President of Berkeley College.

"The average age of the Berkeley College undergraduate receiving an award today is 28 years ... Yes, the unemployment rate is low, but these new graduates may well continue to overcome obstacles and work hard to earn their way. They are prepared and ready, and we look forward to their continued success. So many have demonstrated their commitment to give back to their communities and pay it forward."

Just under 39 percent of the graduates entered Berkeley as first time, full-time students; and, 84 percent identify as minorities. Berkeley College offers a career-focused educational experience with students able to take advantage of traditional classes and online education, with programs in more than 20 fields of study.

Moya Bansile-Williams, JD, Faculty Speaker, encouraged the graduates. "As you stand on the shoulders of all who have supported you on your journey thus far, your professors hope that you can see farther and clearer than ever before. We hope that you can see that

there is no limit to what you can achieve."

Michael Iris, Associate Vice President, Alumni Relations and Career Services, presented the Alumna of the Year award to Karen Pena, Berkeley College Class of 2009. "In addition to her love of learning, Karen actively gives back to the community through volunteer efforts that promote her Peruvian heritage and helping others," said Mr. Iris. "Karen cites her education and raising four children as a single parent among her greatest achievements thus far. He own mother, her children and grandson continue to inspire her every day."

Dallas Reed, PhD, Vice President, Student Development and Campus Life, presented the Outstanding Student Award to Cynthia Caruso, Class of 2019, Online. While Caruso first was uncertain about returning to college as an adult, she knew it was the right decision, especially when she found out she could earn her degree online. She received Dean's or President's List honors every semester. Ms. Caruso also served as a peer mentor and on the Online Student Advisory Board, a community wherein students can share feedback, perspectives and insights in order to foster a more positive student experience. She recently accepted an invitation to serve on the Berkeley College Online Advisory Board.

Earl O'Brien, Berkeley College Class of 2018, served as the Student Speaker. When he decided to return to college, he was able to transfer credits he had earned at another college with which Berkeley had an articulation agreement. A devoted husband and father, he earned his Bachelor of Business Administration degree in Health Services Management. With the help of his

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Berkeley College career counselor, Mr. O'Brien received an internship offer with Compassionate Care Hospice in Brooklyn. Today he is a Medical Management Care Coordinator with Visiting Nurse Service of New York (VNSNY) Choice Health Plans. He intends to earn his Master's degree while working and continue his career goal to become a psychotherapist and work in a clinical mental health counseling capacity.

Edwin Fleurant of Brooklyn, NY, spent most of his childhood in Jamaica, completing his third grade to high school education there before returning to the United States in 2016. Fleurant secured an internship with Marvel Studios in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, during his undergraduate career. He received a Bachelor of Science degree in Informa-

tion Technology Management. As a member of the U.S. Army Reserves, he provides technical support as well as security for major events such as the NYC Marathon.

Imani Miller of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, earned a Bachelor's degree in Health Services Management. Following graduation, she will embark on a mission with the U.S. Peace Corps in Uganda. As a Business Development Advisor, Ms. Morgan will implement initiatives that empower women and girls, and assist households in achieving economic security and upward mobility. During her time at the Berkeley College in White Plains, NY, Ms. Morgan served as a Senior Resident Assistant and Vice President of the Student Government Association. She also was a member of the Honors Program, a selective, interdisciplinary program for high-achieving students.

Siblings Najere and Rajiv Wallace of Brooklyn, NY, immigrated from their na-

tive country of Jamaica to earn their Bachelor of Business Administration degrees at Berkeley College. Both students received honors throughout their undergraduate careers. Mr. Wallace earned two undergraduate degrees – one in Accounting and one in Financial Services – in three years. Ms. Wallace works as a staff accountant at the Dance Theatre of Harlem. Both intend to enroll in New York City colleges for their Master's degrees.

Mauro "Ricky" Zambrano of Lyndhurst, has earned a Bachelor of Science in Justice Studies – Criminal Justice. He quickly became a leader at the Berkeley College New York campus, where he served as President of the Berkeley Spartans, a student-veterans club affiliated with Student Veterans of America. During his time at Berkeley College, Mr. Zambrano interned as a Veterans Outreach Specialist with Bergen County Veteran Services in Hackensack, NJ. Following graduation, he will join the

Division of Family Guidance in Bergen County, NJ, a resource for New Jersey families and at-risk youth. He hopes to pursue a Master's degree and to establish a nonprofit for veterans.

Amal Bendriss of Bloomfield, a native of Morocco, earned her Bachelor of Arts degree with honors, magna cum laude in Graphic Design. In Morocco, she was a middle school art teacher and freelance fashion designer, but when she came to the United States in 1998, she struggled to learn the English language. Ms. Bendriss worked in retail to support her family and two children, finding it difficult to land a job in a creative field without upgrading her knowledge of the software. She thrived at Berkeley College, becoming a Peer Tutor, a high-achieving member of the Honors Program as well as the National Society of Leadership and Success.

Submitted by Berkeley College