



BRILLANTES CAMINANTES GUANAJUATO

Supporting the Future Through Education

Newsletter

September 2020

Brillantes Caminantes Forges Ahead Amid COVID-19

In response to the pandemic, the city and state of Guanajuato closed down in mid-March — two weeks after BC's last in-person monthly members' meeting at Hotel Embajadoras. Plans for the stay-at-home fundraiser were coalescing, and we had just received 31 applications for scholarships for the 2020-2021 school year.



Schools and universities also shut down in March, with classes continuing online through the spring. (When the new semester began in August, classes continued online only.)

As the crisis unfolded, it became clear that — at least for the foreseeable future — in-person monthly meetings were going to be impossible. (Little did we know how long that meeting-less future was to be!)

Along with cancelling the monthly student meetings, the monthly members' meetings were scrapped.

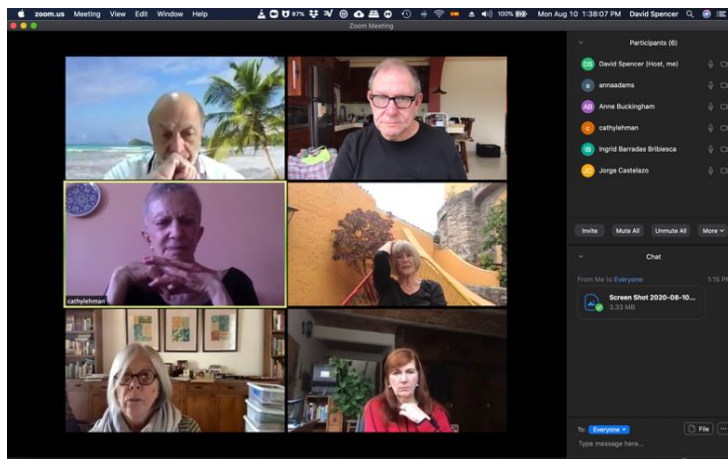
But there were important decisions still to be made. On April 15, the board of directors met via Zoom for the first time and has continued to meet every Monday since that date (with members invited to join any time they wish). As a result, Brillantes has maintained a regular forum for conducting business. An early and ongoing focus was reviewing and revising plans for student interviews and admissions, a process that was affected by continual changes and delays in the universities' examination and admission process. University admission exams that usually occur in April were postponed — initially to early July, and ultimately to the end of July.

In years past, new students were notified of their Brillantes scholarships by the end of June, and orientation occurred during a new student welcome meeting in early August. This year, the selection committee didn't even determine which students would receive scholarships until August 14.

As the summer unfolded, the board strategized about how to communicate the myriad steps involved in taking on new students. This included getting them laptops, instructing them on how to set up bank accounts for automatic deposit, and orienting them to "who's who" and "what's what" related to Brillantes Caminantes.

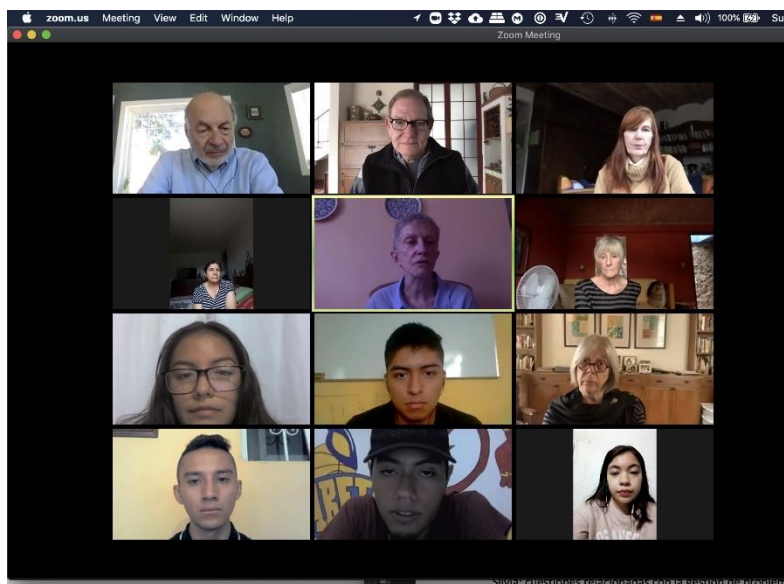
The board also used the summer meetings to develop a number of policies and procedures, which were subsequently submitted by e-mail to the members for review and approval. Members have also been kept up to date through monthly reports that summarize the board meetings and quarterly financial reports.

While not ideal, BC's virtual meetings have enabled the organization to maintain continuity, to award scholarships to new students, and to plan for the future as the pandemic unfolds. Now that the new students have been selected and the school year is under way, the board will continue weekly meetings for the time being, but will add quarterly Zoom meetings for members.



New Student Zoom Orientation

On Sunday, September 6, the BC board of directors — along with Cathy Lehman, coordinator of mentors, and Silvia Salas, BC foundress and long-time member — hosted a welcome Zoom meeting for our new scholarship recipients.



For most of us, it was the first time meeting the students face to face, albeit virtually. We shared a little about our backgrounds, as did the students, and reviewed the roles of the different attendees as they relate to the student scholarships and their responsibilities as scholarship recipients. Although technical difficulties were experienced, they didn't impair everyone's ability to hear and see, to be heard and seen.

We are planning another Zoom student meeting in October that will allow the new students to connect with the rest of their peers. We look forward to the day when we can resume our activities in 3-D.

Our Five New Scholarship Recipients for the 2020-2021 School Year



Arturo Galindo Martínez has been accepted to study experimental biology at the University of Guanajuato. Arturo has always been a high-achieving student — excelling in the classroom, representing his school in English and math competitions, and participating in intramural sports. He chose the field of experimental biology because he has always been fascinated by organisms, microbes and viruses. To investigate more about his career path, he attended a professional day offered by the University of Guanajuato. Like all of our applicants, the most important people in Arturo’s life are his family.

Vanessa Mendez Rocha will begin her studies in chemical/biological pharmaceuticals at the University of Guanajuato. She decided on this career because *“I have always wanted to study something in the health field, and I’ve always enjoyed chemistry class.”* Inspired by a chemistry teacher at her high school, she has worked in a laboratory, drawn blood and learned to analyze it. In ten years, Vanessa sees herself working in a lab, helping others. And completely independent.



Edwin Dario Rodríguez Hernández will be studying mechanical engineering at the University of Guanajuato. He and his three brothers live with their father whom Edwin greatly admires. Aside from being a top student in his class, Edwin enjoys playing the guitar. He also plays soccer, and although he says he’s “not very good,” he does it for the health benefits. He would like to use his education to help save the planet, focusing his studies on the environment.

Josué Emmanuel Sánchez Quintero will study to become a public accountant at the University of Guanajuato. He and his family are very involved with a traditional dance troupe. Additionally, he is active in a church group which tackles community projects and visits sick citizens. Last year, he and 12 other students won a statewide contest to spend ten days in Japan where they studied Japan's political, educational and cultural systems. There, they visited numerous businesses and cultural centers. He says, *"... Japan is a first world country. But what most impressed me was their solidarity in a search for the common good. The people of Japan strive to be better humans, thereby bettering their country."*



Valentina Vizguerra González will begin her studies in food engineering at the State Technological Institute. She has always enjoyed cooking and while in high school worked in a restaurant. When deciding on a career path, Valentina says, *"I have always liked cooking and inventing new recipes, but what particularly drove my interest in this field was to learn 'why does so much food go to waste' and 'how is industrial food prepared?'"* Valentina sees herself in ten years as an independent, confident woman with a good job and stable income, *"happy and satisfied for having achieved my goals and realized my dreams."*

Donations Via PayPal



BC is now able to accept support via PayPal. You can send a one-time donation, or you can set up a recurring monthly payment. Simply go to the Donations page of the Brillantes Caminantes website (<https://www.brillantescaminantes.org/donaciones-donations>), and press the PayPal button that will link you to the PayPal system. (If you don't already have a PayPal account, go to <http://www.paypal.com> and follow the directions for establishing one.) It's easy!

Updates from Our Current Students

Brenda Yaquelin Aguilar

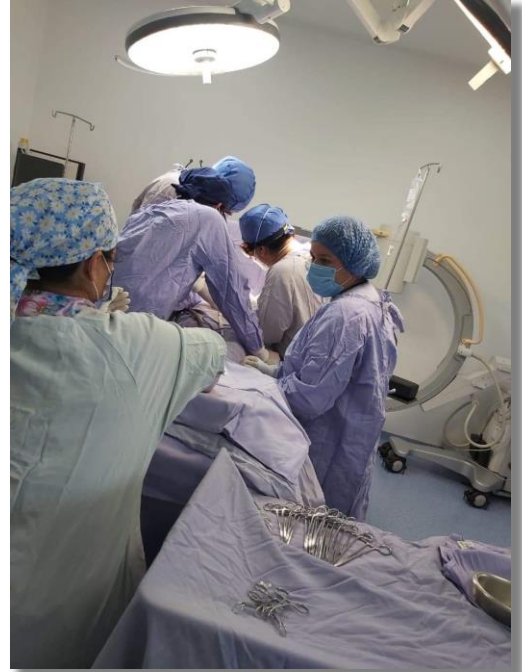
Nursing and Obstetrics at The University of Guanajuato

Mentor: Sunday Sommers

As a part of her studies, Brenda is a student apprentice/intern at Guanajuato's General Hospital. Her typical shift is Monday – Friday, 7 a.m. – 1 p.m., but due to the workload, she often stays later. During August, she was able to observe procedures in the hospital's operating room. Brenda writes, *"I am really enjoying my stay here. It is a hospital where I am being given all the freedoms to put my classroom knowledge into practice. And the staff is very accessible."*

As a precautionary measure during the pandemic, the nursing interns are not allowed to rotate through wards which might put them or patients at risk of contagion (e.g., respiratory triage and hospitalization, internal medicine and the emergency room). However, outfitted with the requisite masks and protective goggles, she has been a witness to both trauma and gynecology surgeries.

"Without a doubt, I really enjoy my work at the hospital, even though the situation we are living through now is complicated. I try to protect myself because my main fear is infecting my family. I am concerned [when I see] people continue to go out into the street without protecting themselves. Maybe if they saw a little of what we endure in the hospital, they would understand. I have seen colleagues and doctors get COVID, and that makes me realize that none of us are immune."



Maribel Ortega

Nursing and Obstetrics at The University of Guanajuato

Mentor: Silvia Salas

Maribel is also a nursing and obstetrics student apprentice/intern, based at IMSS Hospital No. 10 near the Jardín del Cantador. Her hours at the hospital are 7 a.m. – 2 p.m., weekdays and is enrolled in an English language course at the University of Guanajuato in the afternoons.



Jennifer Rodriguez
Political Science at The University of Guanajuato
Mentor: Pam Naessig

Jennifer not only finished the spring term with excellent grades but also helped her fellow students with their coursework. Jennifer has completed one of her three Social Service projects — teaching entrance exam prep classes for potential UG Political Science majors. During the summer, Jennifer tutored three students, all of whom were accepted into their programs of choice.



Erika Macedo Tovar
Political Science and Public Administration at The University of Guanajuato
Mentor: Anna Adams/Rob Fleming

Erika is preparing a workshop on sexual violence to present to school-aged students.



Consuelo (Chelo) Aguayo
Geological Engineering at The University of Guanajuato
Mentor: Xochitl Cervantes

During her summer break, Chelo participated in several geology-related, online seminars. She also aided a university professor in digitizing geological maps.

While online-learning has been a challenge for some students, Chelo finds that she is significantly more productive in this new paradigm. Whereas she spent many wasted hours commuting from home to school and back (as well as ineffectual downtime between classes), she has adapted well to online education (including an extracurricular English language class). However, she is not 100% homebound, as she still has laboratory/in-field work which must be done in person.

Recent Graduate Ariana Michell Ramos Rocha Awarded Prestigious Scholarship to Study Abroad



“Completing my university studies gave me great satisfaction. It was the result of four years of effort, preparation and many challenges. But in the end, it was possible, and it was all worth it. But with the end of this period of my life, another one is beginning — filled with dreams and new goals.

One of my goals is to study for an MA degree in a foreign country. I’ve always dreamed of living and studying in another country. So, I began to look for support for this new dream, and I found another organization that offers scholarships to students with excellent academic records to study abroad.

So, I said, ‘this is my new opportunity.’ I sent my application, took a few exams, and finally I was selected by the organization *Líderes en Desarrollo Santander – FUNED [Santander’s Leaders in Development — Mexican Foundation for Education, Technology and Science]*. This organization offers scholarships to help students find and apply for MA programs in foreign universities. It gives me a lot of tools such as workshops about academic

offerings in different countries, preparation for standardized tests, preparation for writing essays and letters of application, help in the search for financial support and other options that will make my dream easier to realize.

One thing I like about this scholarship is that it gives me the opportunity to read the testimony of other students who have managed to complete a dream like mine. This fills me with energy and motivation to reaffirm my belief that everything is possible if you work for it.

New things are coming, new challenges and new blessings. I am convinced that they will help me to grow to become a better person personally and professionally.

I hope that my testimony will help other students know that nothing is impossible, and that they should take advantage of every opportunity to reach their goals. There are great organizations, like Brillantes Caminantes, that support serious students. One only has to make the effort to become one of them.”

“Many of our dreams seem impossible at first, then they seem improbable, and then when we make a firm commitment, they become inevitable.” – Christopher Reeve



...but your bank is still open, and so is ours! BC has expanded its capacity to receive support: you can now donate directly from your U.S. bank to our Bank of America account via Zelle. If you aren’t already familiar with this easy and safe way to send money, look for Zelle in your banking app or click on <https://www.zellepay.com/> for more information.

To set up a transfer (one-time only, or a regular donation), you will need to enter our recipient name (Brillantes Caminantes, A.C.) and our e-mail address (bricamtreasurer@yahoo.com).

In Their Own Words: Our Recent Graduates Give Thanks for the Gift of Education



Angeles Andrea (Andi) Barbosa Granados
Degree in Education at The University of Guanajuato
Mentor: Karen Robinson

“What it means to be a student...

I write these lines with the intention of infinitely thanking for all the support that this association bring me, the “Brillantes Caminantes” association. They really have been a significant help in my educational development, because at all times they have urged me to the challenge that I acquire long ago, the challenge of pursuit a university degree and completing it; thus fulfilling a dream that I had since I was a child the dream to be a university student and to give back to my country, to my society a little bit of what always has given me; and today thanks to you I was able to fulfil it.

I really think that in my journey as a student I was surrounded by wonderful people, that make possible my school journey at all times; that is why I would like to thank my university, “la Universidad de Guanajuato”, to my career, the career in education, my teachers, my classmates, my friends and my family... and of course to each and every one of you: the members, volunteers, and donors of this association because all of you have been part of this achievement, of this triumph.

Right now I found myself motivated to share everything that I have learned, to put into practice my vocation and my knowledge; of the career that I chose, to be an educational counselor, with the intention of help at the Young, to listen, guide, encourage, and support them (as you have done with me) to continue with their education; providing them at all times an empathy, a listening, a comprehensive learning and above all a quality education; being aware that the young are the ones that can help to transform and give a positive change to our country and that is the education the means that can make it possible to achieve this goal.

Is that why I thank B.C. for support me and each one of the students that they have accepted over the years, really support to a very noble cause, like it’s the education; without your help this personal goal that I always had would have been not possible. Thank you for believing in us as students and for betting on Mexican education like you have been doing so far! Thank you very much!

(P.S.: If you are next to request the scholarship that is issued here rest assured that the association will become your second family, because it will be at all times one more support, on the challenge of studying a career, because we understand EVERYTHING that being a student implies... Pursue your dreams and achieve your goals.)”

Leticia (Leti) Caudillo Ortega
Degree in Veterinary Medicine and
Zootechny at The University of Guanajuato
Mentor: David Rosen

“I am deeply grateful to this association called Brillantes Caminantes, since without it I would not have continued with my university studies. They also helped me with psychological problems that I had, and thanks to that I am now a better person. I also want to thank all the activities in which I participated within the association since they were also a very important learning.

I hope that the association never stops helping young people who want to study a university degree because I think it is a very great help and a very favorable experience for those who do not have enough financial resources.

Thanks to all the members of the association for giving me the opportunity to be part of this group that has become a second family for me. I love and respect you all.

Rest assured that a good person was formed in me, wanting to continue succeeding in life and focused on the continuous success of what I like to do the most, which is Veterinary Medicine.”



Natalia Itzel Acevedo
Degree in Primary Education at Escuela Normal Guanajuato
Mentor: Celise Ingram



“I began my experience with Brillantes Caminantes one year ago in my last year of studies to become a primary school teacher. I am extremely grateful to this wonderful organization that gave me the opportunity to be part of it when I most needed support.

To be a member of Brillantes Caminantes teaches one a lot. The atmosphere of friendliness is inviting and enriching and permitted me to meet new people who are welcoming with open arms and made me feel happy to be among them. I admire the events, like the Pastorela; a fun experience.

Thank you Brillantes Caminantes for the support that you gave me. I am most grateful for the computer and for your support to travel to Puebla, a journey that contributed to my personal and cultural growth. Thank you, too, to my mentor for her support with English classes that really helped me. I am also thankful for her understanding during our chats. She is an extraordinary person with whom I hope to continue my relationship.

I feel truly blessed for the opportunity to be part of this organization with so many wonderful people who help students to complete their studies, who graciously open doors to help students become successful. I value everything that they did for me and for those of us who are in need.

Thanks to Brillantes Caminantes and my family, I proudly hold a degree in primary education.”

Ariana Michell Ramos Rocha
Degree in Spanish Education at The University of Guanajuato
Mentor: Anna Adams

“When I started my university studies, I faced different challenges and fears. It was a new phase and I really didn't know what was waiting for me. All I knew was that I had to do my best to make the most of this process.

On the way to being a student, I faced different challenges. One of them was having economic difficulties to pay for my school expenses and I began to look for support. That's when I found Brillantes Caminantes, and this has been one of the best experiences I have had.

In this organization, I found more than I expected, since with their monthly support it was not so difficult for me to pay for my expenses such as my son's daycare, which allowed me to be in school while my son was cared for and I felt safe. And being able to pay my tuition every semester, and much more. Brillantes Caminantes supported me with a computer which helped me with assignments, homework and exams. This made my academic work easier, since before I had to stay in the library until very late to complete my projects and assignments.

But beyond that, something that this organization gave me and for which I will always be thankful and will always carry in my heart, was their friendship. Each one of the members of Brillantes Caminantes is a great person and friend that works hard for a cause as important as education. I always felt sure that I could count on them. I knew I could tell them about difficult situations either academic or personal, and they would help me to solve the problem. In each meeting I always learned something new. They worked so hard to nurture our knowledge in many different and interesting areas. Also, I had the opportunity to spend time with the other Brillantes from whom I learned a lot. And I met some great people.

My dear tutor Anna, little by little became a great friend. She showed me her sincere support and a genuine interest in my development and my achievements. I thank her for opening the doors of her house to me and especially from her heart. Every afternoon we conversed, we practiced English, and talked about my academic progress or my difficulties in school. I value those afternoons and will always remember them with much love and gratitude.

Thank you very much for everything you gave me without knowing me and with the only intention of being another student who could achieve her goals and dreams. Each member of this organization played a very important role for me and I appreciate their work and their time.

I have finished my studies. It was not easy, but now I have more confidence in my abilities, and I know that I can go as far as my mind imagines. And I trust that like the members of Brillantes Caminantes, there are many generous people in this world, and that fills me with joy because humanity needs this kind of people. Thank you Brillantes Caminantes. Just thank you.”



Our Board of Directors

A.J. Buckingham, President • David Spencer, Vice President • Anna Adams, Secretary • Jorge Castelazo, Treasurer • Ingrid Barradas Bribiesca, Coordinator of Student Affairs

Thanks!

- To the many students who contributed to this issue of the Newsletter.
- To writers: Anna Adams and A.J. Buckingham
- To translators: Anna Adams, A.J. Buckingham and Rob Fleming

Editor: Rob Fleming • Designer: Agota Page

We hope you enjoyed reading this issue of our newsletter, but if you don't want to receive it in the future, e-mail brillantescaminantes@gmail.com with **Unsubscribe** in the subject line.