



# BRILLANTES CAMINANTES

## GUANAJUATO

### Supporting the Future Through Education

Newsletter

March 2021

#### A Presidential Briefing **From** AJ Buckingham

Despite the challenges and isolation of our students learning via online instruction, their grades indicate that they are thriving academically. Many of the conferences, extracurricular activities, and accomplishments that we often highlight in the newsletter, however, have been either postponed or cancelled due to the pandemic.



Although some professional internships have been delayed for our current students, graduating students continue to move forward toward completing their final requirements.

Applications for this coming year's scholarships are currently arriving in our inboxes.

On the administrative front, the BC annual meeting was held via Zoom on January 25, 2021. Attendance was high and included members who signed in from California and Washington, as well those of us anchored in Guanajuato.

The offices of president, vice president, and treasurer were up for election: the current office holders—AJ Buckingham, David Spencer, and Jorge Castelazo, respectively—all agreed to stand for re-election, and the members voted unanimously in favor of the slate.

The annual financial report showed a healthy bottom line: budgeted revenues were exceeded, and expenses were lower than budgeted (due to the pandemic). Overall, 94% of our 2020 expenses supported the students: 80 percent went to

scholarships and 14 percent to other student-related items like computers, healthcare, and extracurricular-academic support.

Click here for our [Annual Report](#), which can also be found on our [newly-designed website](#).

## News From Our Current Students



Ariadna



Brenda



Daniel



Erika

**Ariadna Rodríguez** studies Culture and Art at UG. A scholarship for a Canadian trip is pending because of the pandemic. Besides her classes, Ariadna has a part time job at the Mummy Museum.

**Brenda Aguilar** studies Nursing and Obstetrics at UG. She is currently undertaking a year of Professional Practice at the General Hospital, making rotations in surgery, obstetrics, and taking biopsies.

**Daniel Correa** is studying to be a surgeon at *Universidad Autonoma Metropolitana*. He has finished his Internship, and has begun a year of Social Service at a hospital in Chiapas. After that, he will begin his residency in Internal Medicine.

**Erika Tovar** studies Political Science and Public Administration at UG/León. She has been volunteering as a political pollster, organizing a band of fellow students to canvas neighborhoods in Guanajuato capital, asking residents which political issues they find most important. Erika is also participating in an 8-week, online symposium with students from the University of Guanajuato and Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas. Intended to promote an international and inter-cultural exchange, topics of discussion will include cultural symbols, foods, ethnocentric beliefs, and the similarities/differences between their cultures and backgrounds. The module involves both individual and group work, demanding communication of one's ideas in English as well as Spanish.

**Jennifer Rodríguez** studies Political Science at UG. This past November 25, International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, Jenny moderated a Facebook discussion on gender violence in university settings.

**Josué Quintero** is studying Public Accounting at UG. He received a certificate of excellence for participating and assisting in online Tax Commission meetings.

**Ofelia González** studies Administration at *Instituto Universitario del Centro Mexico*. While she completed all of her course work in December, she is now taking a 4-month "diplomado" class, after which she will graduate.



Jennifer



Josué



Ofelia

## News **From** Our Graduates

### Recent Geological Engineering Graduate Consuelo Aguayo Lona Gives Her Thanks

“Without any hesitation, I can say that Brillantes Caminantes has been my savior.



I remember the day when my high school counselor told me about the scholarship. Unfortunately, it was the same day the application and supporting documents were due to be submitted to Brillantes. So, I gathered everything in a single afternoon and (because time was running out) ran to deliver them. After several interviews, I was awarded a scholarship.

I am infinitely grateful for all the support—not only for the economic assistance, but also for the career guidance, the monthly presentations, workshops and *pastorelas*, which—although initially difficult—improved my self-confidence. Knowing that someone cares about your academic and personal growth was always satisfying and comforting. Your enthusiasm for supporting others is to be admired.

I can only recognize the great work you do, because you change the lives of so many students and their families. I see myself in August 2016, full of dreams, beginning my studies without the slightest idea of how this will unfold. Four and a half years later, it is time to follow a new path—towards work and new challenges.

This is not a farewell, because I know that at any moment I can meet a fellow student or one of the members and I will eagerly greet them, because Brillantes Caminantes is like a wonderful family that grows more and more every day.”

### Graduate Iván Betancourt Writes From Mexico City

“My name is Ivan Betancourt, and I am currently 27 years old. Thanks to the immense support of my mother and Brillantes Caminantes, I studied General Medicine from 2012 to 2018. After graduating in 2018, I completed my year of Professional Social Service as a general practitioner in a small community near *Cristo Rey* in Guanajuato. During that time, I learned the importance of practicing medicine in remote districts and sought to provide my patients with the best possible care. I also began to realize that I wanted to focus on a medical specialty—helping people improve their mental health.

After passing a national exam that same year, I was admitted to the Ramón de la Fuente Muñiz National Institute of Psychiatry, an institution renowned for its mental health research throughout Latin America. Being selected brought not only incredible joy and satisfaction but also disruptive life changes, as I needed to move to Mexico City with my wife and now three-year-old daughter: We left our nuclear families and our lives as we knew them—leaving our quiet, peaceful town and moving to the largest and most chaotic metropolis in the country.





But we've done very well. We began with what little we brought with us and —with the support of our families— gradually organized our life together.

We have lived in Mexico City for two years now. Even with the pandemic and the ensuing precautionary procedures, I have continued to care for my patients. Although I have no front-line healthcare workers, the demand for mental health services has increased considerably; I am treating and comforting many indirect victims of the pandemic.

I balance my work demands with the protection and care of my family; my daughter Pía is just beginning pre-school.

I have two more years of training in Mexico City before becoming a psychiatrist. Subsequently, I hope to study an additional year at the Fray Bernardino Alvarez Psychiatric Hospital and become a Forensic Psychiatrist for the legal system. And lastly, the following year I would like to earn a Master's Degree in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy at the Mexican Institute of Psychotherapy (which I have deferred for the time being due to economic reasons).

My wife and I are enjoying Mexico City, so even after I have completed my studies, we may continue to live here.”

### Fabian Pacheco Describes His Life After Graduation



“It has been just over a year since this pandemic hit the world, affecting us globally across all social strata. Frankly, I am doing well within the parameters of this “new normal”.

I am currently working at Guanajuato City Hall, and although we do follow designated pandemic guidelines, things have not changed much in my work life.

During my free time, I have focused on my personal and professional growth. Since gyms and sport facilities have closed, I made room in my home for CrossFit workouts. I’ve also changed some food routines, helping me maintain my health and strengthen my immune system to certain diseases. Also, I self-isolated in a sparsely-populated area near Santa Rosa for several weeks to cleanse and calm my spirit.

I trust everyone is in good health, and I hope that no one has had the bad fortune of getting this disease.”

## *In Memoriam*

The board of directors regrets to announce the passing of one of Brillantes' active members, Colleen Coté. Many of us in Guanajuato first met Colleen when she owned the wonderful English-language bookstore, *Donkey Jote*. Students will certainly remember Colleen for the delicious goodies she prepared for student meetings.

Colleen was an active reader and book lover. In her memory, the board has established the Colleen Coté Reading Circle and will use all funds donated in her name to buy books that we gift to our students annually on Three Kings Day. The goal of the Reading Circle is to encourage our students to read for pleasure, and we can think of no more fitting tribute to Colleen than to name the Reading Circle in her honor.

All of us will certainly miss Colleen's generosity, her funny sense of humor, and her enthusiastic support of Brillantes.



### Donate directly to BC from a traditional IRA and save on your U.S. taxes

If you're a retiree over age 70½, you must start taking [required minimum distributions](#) (RMDs) from your traditional IRA every year. If you make what's called a qualified charitable distribution, you can donate all or a portion of your RMD, up to \$100,000 a year, directly to charity and not have to pay taxes on it. Thus, a taxpayer in the 22 percent bracket who donates a \$5,000 RMD to charity saves \$1,100 in federal income taxes. Go to <https://www.aarp.org/money/taxes/info-2019/charitable-gifts-new-tax-law.html> for further information.

#### Did you know?

- We never commit to new students until we know that we will have the required funding to support them for the duration of their academic careers.
- You can pledge to be a long-term donor, helping us ensure that we have a continuous and reliable source of funds.
- Full sponsorship of a student costs \$6000 USD or \$1,200 USD for five years; half sponsorship costs \$3000 USD, or \$600 USD for five years
- Donations of any amount and duration are, of course, welcome—no matter how old you are!

More information on donating and making an ongoing pledge at  
<https://www.brillantescaminantesgto.org/donations>

## 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 students, graduates and mentors who contributed to this issue of the Newsletter.
- To writers: Anna Adams and AJ Buckingham

Editor: Rob Fleming

Design: 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 <mailto:brillantescaminantes@gmail.com> to unsubscribe.

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