



## ANNUAL REPORT 2023



### A YEAR OF CHANGE

2023 was a year of changes for Brillantes Caminantes, A.C. (BC). Four of our six board members resigned or stepped back from active participation. New board members volunteered and were elected. New members were approved by the Board. New volunteers have volunteered to be on several different committees, including the Selection Committee. Concepts toward reorganizing the administration of BC are being explored. And we put on a fantastic *pastorela!*

Our mission “To support talented Mexican students with limited financial resources through university scholarships, providing mentorship, and teaching them practical life skills” is moving forward.

## 1. BOARD OF DIRECTORS UPDATE

1.1 The following Board Officers were elected February 6, 2023, for two-year terms:

**Ingrid Barradas Bribiesca**, President.  
**Christina Rockrise**, Vice President  
**Carolyn Black**, Treasurer

Ingrid Barradas Bribiesca, President, and Christina Rockrise, Vice-President submitted resignation letters June 19, 2023.

1.2 The following officers were elected February 6, 2023, for one year:

**Euclides Santiago**, completing the term of the previous Student Affairs Coordinator, Ingrid Barradas Bribiesca  
**Catherine Krause**, completing the term of the previous Secretary, Nina Johnson

Catherine Krause submitted her resignation letter on June 6, 2023.

Euclides Santiago stepped back from the Student Affairs Coordinator's duties on October 20, 2023 due to work responsibilities.

## 2. NEW BOARD MEMBERS FOR BRILLANTES CAMINANTES

On July 17, 2023 the members met in an emergency members' meeting in the dining room of Hotel Embajadoras. The resignations of the President, Vice-President and Secretary were reviewed, members broke into individual groups to discuss the potential future of Brillantes Caminantes and those suggestions were written down by the remaining members of the Board for the membership's consideration. Volunteers for the vacant Board positions were requested and Susan Castelazo volunteered to be Secretary or; if someone else volunteered to be Secretary, Susan would volunteer to be President.

After the meeting, Linda González spoke to Susan and volunteered to be Secretary after her anticipated shoulder repair in the United States. The following morning, July 18, Karen Robinson spoke with Susan and volunteered to be Vice-President. On July 25, 2023, the Board appointed Susan Castelazo President, Karen Robinson Vice-President, and Linda González as co-Secretary. The word went out to the members that we have a full Board.

On August 5, 2023, an emergency Members Meeting was called and the newly appointed Board members were elected. It was also decided that Brillantes

Caminantes was currently in a position to accept new students, pursuant to the recommendations of the Selection Committee.

### 3. STUDENTS' RELATED TOPICS



3.1 BC accepted two new students based on the recommendations of the Selection Committee:

**Narda Elizabeth Patlan Ramos, Law at UGTO**

**Angel Leonardo Antonio Granadas Flores, Mechanical Engineering at ITESG**

3.2 Five Students graduated:

**Odett Ibarra, Law**

**Nayeli Rangel González, Public Accounting**

**Karla Ivett Ahumada Ramirez, Veterinary medicine**

**Jennifer Rodríguez Vega, Political Science**

**Jorge Humberto Martínez González, Mathematics**

#### 3.3 Students' meetings in 2023

This year we were able to have in-person monthly students' meetings. Based on the students' preference, we generally met the first Saturday of the month. When available, the meeting was held in the garden of Gene Byron Museum thanks to the generosity of Estela Cordero Cabrera.

#### 3.4 Student questionnaire

Over time it became apparent that not only did BC not know important and crucial details about a student's university program (such as the cost of *titulación*), neither did the students. Therefore, a detailed questionnaire was

developed with these pertinent questions. The questionnaire was significantly modified and updated by Rob Fleming and given to the students and their mentors to work on together to gather and submit the requested information so that all would be better informed. Each fall the students will again undertake this exercise, so all stay up to date on the requirements, etc. for their program.

### 3.5 Graduate Outreach

Several of our graduates attended Sunday morning Members Meetings. If we want them to continue to attend, we need to schedule our Members Meetings on days and at times when our now-working graduates (some who live out of town) can attend. Sunday mornings at 11:00 a.m. currently appears to be the best time for our graduates and our employed members to participate.

## 4. ASSOCIATION ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND HIGHLIGHTS

### 4.1 Membership

In 2023 we accepted 9 new members:

Luis Barajas (cellist)  
Andy Barbosa (BC graduate)  
Alfredo Aguilar (BC graduate)  
Rocio Rocho Ramirez (Dentist)  
Matilda Tónix (Psychologist)  
Joshua Valencia (Engineer)  
Emma Hinajosa Caballero (Restaurateur)  
Melba Sarahi Hernandez Figueroa (Teacher)  
Oriana Landa (Environmental scientist)

### 4.2 New Mentors

With the arrival of the new students in August the following new mentors were assigned:

Bill Merrell is mentoring Leo Granadas  
Oriana Landa is mentoring Elizabeth Patlan

## 4.3 Newsletter



Kimberli Isaacs is our Newsletter editor and prepared the April edition. Agota Page continues to be responsible for design and distribution.

## 4.4 Fundraising



### *Pastorela*

The *Pastorela*, presented by BC students, is still the most important fund-raising event of the year. Our students performed the different roles of the *Pastorela*, which was written and directed by Juan José Prado. The revival was presented at the Museo Gene Byron thanks to the generosity of Estella Cordero Cabrera in allowing us to use the museum's lovely garden.

We promoted the *Pastorela* through posters around town and on our Facebook page. Sarahi Hernandez and Rob Fleming worked together to design, print and distribute the posters and tickets for the *Pastorela*. Members were given tickets to sell and did so successfully.

Pamela Naessig and Rob Fleming organized the ‘front of the house’ and the refreshments. Members were asked to prepare food or contribute money toward the refreshments, significantly reducing this expense. Many of the students’ families attended.

The actors, dancers, singers, students and volunteers did a stellar job! It was reported to us that this was one of the “best ever” *Pastorelas*.

Call for donations end of year

As already done before, also in 2023 a year end email was sent to our existing donors requesting their continued support. It was also sent to individuals who have expressed interest in our work and in-kind supporters and are on our email list. It was also posted on our Facebook page.

#### 4.5 Expanding public awareness

Expanding public awareness goes hand in hand with fundraising. We launched our new Facebook and Instagram pages, which gave us a presence we have not previously had. This outreach will expand our recognition and the public’s understanding of our mission. The Board expects to focus on expanding social media presence in the near future.

Nina Johnson, former BC president, presented a workshop for new members. She covered a variety of topics including a brief history of the organization, bylaws provisions, student services and the role of members.

We continued our participation with the GTO nonprofit fair in the Jardin—the third year.

#### 4.6 A Working Group regarding potential administrative changes

On November 29, the membership voted to have a team discuss possibilities for reorganizing the administrative structure of Brillantes Caminantes in order to streamline administrative procedures. Rees Storm agreed to be the chair. Pamela Naessig, AJ Buckingham and Jorge Castelazo met on several occasions and presented to the Board via email a report detailing three proposals. The Board is examining each of these proposals and will bring recommendations to the membership in early 2024.

#### 4.7 Tech: Document sharing, email addresses, personalized Mentor Reports

The Google Workspace initiative, initially undertaken by the 2021 Board of Directors, was reintroduced to the 2023 Board in March. Rob Fleming assumed responsibility for managing BC's digital realm, succeeding volunteer Ross

Russell. Recognizing the importance of BC-based email addresses and the need for a shared online document vault, a Workspace guidance committee was formed, consisting of Catherine Krause, Ingrid Barradas Bribiesca, and Rob Fleming.

To improve efficiency, we established email addresses for each BC Board Position rather than individual Board Members' names. For easier transition and continuity, future office holders can effortlessly access their predecessor's emails for historical context and clarity. Additionally, we obtained a shorter domain name (URL), transitioning from [brillantescaminantesgto.org](http://brillantescaminantesgto.org) to [BCgto.org](http://BCgto.org), making it simpler to type and reducing errors when accessing email addresses or the website.

The committee established naming and filing conventions for both historical and future documents. A contact-sharing application was purchased and configured, providing access to a unified database with customizable fields. Rob Fleming conducted comprehensive training sessions, including one-on-one and group and sessions with Board members, focusing on best practices for email management and document storage.

Personalized Mentor Report surveys/forms were developed and deployed to more easily facilitate the tracking of individual students' monthly progress and setbacks.

#### 4.8 Ongoing Efforts

The board continues to work on operational issues. These include:

We have a new Registered Agent: Northwest Registered Agent (NWRA). NWRA will accept any legal documents on Brillantes Caminantes' behalf and will forward any US mail to us via email or, if necessary, Fed-Ex or DHL. Nina Johnson's friend, Donna Scott, has been performing these duties for Brillantes Caminantes for many years. We thank her very much for her service.

Obtaining an updated *escritura* and changing the signatories on Brillantes Caminantes two bank accounts.

Continuing monthly Student Meetings



Finding good candidates for election to the positions of Student Affairs Coordinator and Secretary, each of which come up for election at the Annual Meeting.

Exploring potential administrative changes. This project was begun in 2023 and will continue for some time.

Completing revisions to the Mentors' Manual and holding mentor meetings.

Revamping the website.

## 5. FINANCE REPORT

The table below shows the actual income and expenses for 2023, and the adopted budget for 2023. Financially 2023 was not a good year for BC. Actual total income, even with two donations of \$6,000, was only 63% of the proposed budget. Actual expenses were lower by 17%. The result was that annual expenses were higher than the annual income by \$9,634.

The 2024 budget is based on the current 18 students. *Becas* are based on actual payments to be made (196). There will be seven students graduating in 2024, however there will be none from private universities. Therefore, *titulación* expenses will not be as high as in previous years. Before new students can be accepted, the actual revenues received should be taken into account.



# Brillantes Caminantes, A.C.

## Statement of Activities 2023 and Budget 2024

	December Mexican + US \$MXN	2023 Proposed in \$MXN	2024 Proposed \$MXN
<b>Revenue</b>			
<b>Donations</b>			
Pledges	488,055	665,000	476,000
Individual	23,683	120,000	20,000
Amazon Smile	417	300	-
<b>Total donations</b>	<b>512,155</b>	<b>785,300</b>	<b>496,000</b>
			-
<b>Fundraisers</b>			
Tickets Pastorela	42,763		
Wine, beer sales	3,490		
Raffle	2,360		
Donations for food	1,955	110,000	50,000
<b>Total fundraisers</b>	<b>50,568</b>	<b>110,000</b>	<b>50,000</b>
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>562,723</b>	<b>895,300</b>	<b>546,000</b>
			-
<b>Expenses</b>			
<b>Student fees</b>			
Scholarships	572,700	600,000	428,000
Titulación	19,690	24,000	15,000
<b>Total student fees</b>	<b>592,390</b>	<b>624,000</b>	<b>443,000</b>
<b>Extra academic support</b>			
Additional courses	-	9,000	2,000
Conferences	17,856	10,000	10,000
Other extra	-	31,500	-
<b>Total extra academic</b>	<b>17,856</b>	<b>50,500</b>	<b>12,000</b>
<b>Extra health support</b>			
Dental	11,187		
Optometry	19,158		
Psychotherapy	4,400		
Other medical (nutrition)	5,000	35,000	30,000
<b>Total extra health</b>	<b>39,745</b>	<b>35,000</b>	<b>30,000</b>
<b>Total student fees &amp; extra support</b>	<b>649,991</b>	<b>709,500</b>	<b>485,000</b>
			-

Student meeting expense			-
Space	-	2,000	-
Food	5,453	6,000	12,000
Other	1,180	1,000	-
Total student meeting	<u>6,633</u>	<u>9,000</u>	<u>12,000</u>
Other student expenses			-
Computers	18,688	40,000	-
Reading program books	4,828	10,000	3,000
Total other student	<u>23,516</u>	<u>50,000</u>	<u>3,000</u>
Total student fees, extra, & other	<u><b>680,140</b></u>	<u><b>768,500</b></u>	<u><b>500,000</b></u>
			-
Fundraiser expenses			-
Publicity	3,725		-
Entertainment	-		-
Food	1,550		2,000
Drinks	-		1,000
Other	-		-
Tables, chairs	1,300		1,300
Total fundraiser expenses	<u>6,575</u>	<u>35,000</u>	<u>2,043</u>
			-
Operating Expenses			-
Newsletter	-	950	-
Website	-	5,000	2,000
Bank fees	-		-
Bank	3,503	6,000	3,600
Paypal	617	3,500	800
Accounting	-		-
Accountant	19,000	5,000	20,000
Software	-	-	-
Postage, Mailing	-	1,000	-
Legal Services	7,937	50,000	6,000
Printing	-	1,000	1,000
Supplies	6,043	500	-
Travel	-		-
Mentor Business Meeting	2,692	500	-
Member/Mentor Social Event	-	-	-
Total Operating Expenses	<u>39,793</u>	<u>73,450</u>	<u>33,400</u>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<u><b>726,508</b></u>	<u><b>876,950</b></u>	<u><b>535,443</b></u>
<b>Net Ordinary Income</b>	<u><b>-\$163,785</b></u>	<u><b>\$18,350</b></u>	<u><b>\$10,557</b></u>

Bank balance 31-Dec-23	BofA	72,744	USD
	PayPal	1,061	USD
	BBVA	122,262	MXN
	Petty Cash	5,000	MXN
	Undeposited	37,250	MXN

## 6. LOOKING FORWARD

Brillantes Caminantes is strong. A lot of work has been done in 2023 to rebuild Brillantes Caminantes and improvements in efficiency are ahead for 2024. In 2023 a “Working Committee” was formed to give the Board and the Membership learned advice regarding adjusting the administrative processes of Brillantes Caminantes; new members joined, new Board members joined, were appointed and were elected. We now have a cohesive (and therefore a strong) leadership from our Board members. All of our Board meetings are open to the membership.

We anticipate a good year (2024) to come, as, with the help of the membership, we develop more efficiency in the administrative aspects of Brillantes Caminantes. Change is not always easy; but the changes foreseen are positive ones that will enable Brillantes Caminantes to become more efficient with its members’ and volunteers’ time, efforts and fiscal contributions.

We’re making it possible for our graduates and working members to be more actively involved and form part of our membership by rescheduling our Members’ Meetings and Board Meetings to days and times in which they can attend. They are invited to participate in Members’ Meetings, Board Meetings and Students’ Meetings to learn more about BC and find the best way to bring to Brillantes Caminantes their own experience as professionals in Guanajuato and former scholarship holders.

The Membership voted on June 19, 2023 to allow the Board to hire Cecani to help them obtain a *donataria autorizada* (a Mexican classification of non-profit status). The Board has sought professional counsel on the appropriate timing of the process to become a *donataria autorizada* and will pursue it when we have a pending government grant or a company donation that warrants the expense, effort to obtain, and effort to maintain the special bookkeeping that is required by a *donataria autorizada*.

Our final goal is to serve our students and allow them to grow professionally and personally through education to become valuable members of Mexican society. This is our mission. We need always to keep it in mind.

This and more are doable with the help of all of you. We want to say thank you to each and every one of you for your time and the dedication you have invested in BC throughout 2023 — a year packed with notable changes, and therefore disruption. Without you none of what has been done would have been possible. You are the future of BC. Together we will make this future better.

Presented by:

Susan Castelazo, President, Karen Robinson, Vice-President, Carolyn Black, Treasurer, Linda González, Secretary; Tech Expert, Rob Fleming