

First & Last Name: Christine Quintana

What is your anticipated graduation date & college? I received my Associates Degree (Psychology) on December 15, 2018 from San Antonio College. I will formally “walk the stage” on May 11, 2019.

What are your educational, career, and personal goals? My personal goal is to continue with my current education journey by obtaining my Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology. I am currently enrolled at the University of Incarnate Word pursuing a degree in Psychology.

Tell us about your education journey. A “Journey” would definitely be the best way to describe my education path. I stopped and started San Antonio College several times over a time span of 15+ years before finally finishing. Earlier on and as a young single parent it was very difficult to complete a degree while juggling children, work, and their school activities particular during the time when public transportation stopped running after 6pm. Upon further reflection, it was also the numerous attempts (and failures) trying to pass my math courses that eventually scrapped away my motivation piece by piece and eventually I would give up. I described to Micaela (Upgrade Director) that College Algebra was the “bane of my existence” and how apprehensive I was at the thought of taking College Algebra and failing again!

I knew that going back to college would require a different mind-set so I decided to take my math course first (and no other classes). At San Antonio College, they also started a new "required" Math lab which meant that you had an additional type of tutoring class where you could do your homework and ask for help on any of the problems you didn't get in class. The program that you use for the Math Lab also had informal testing questions where you could better identify areas you needed to continue focusing on.

I think that a combination of things resulted in me taking a step of faith to try for my degree again – one of which being the ability to see my daughter complete her Bachelor’s Degree in Nursing in 2017 and thinking how inspired I was by her tenacity to overcome any obstacle set before her and to persevere all while working and studying to get through a tough nursing curriculum! I can also hear my son reminding me that I could do it and that maybe the way I used to think to solve math problems would be different now that so much time had passed (he was right!) and of course volunteered many times to be my mathematical guinea pig by trying a problem or two. In the past two (2) years I also had the opportunity to serve as a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA). A CASA is a volunteer from the community who advocates for children taken from their homes due to abuse or neglect. My experiences with my “CASA kiddos” taught me so much about the resiliency of children and the goodness of our community, specifically their willingness to step in and volunteer their time, resources and support for these children and their families. It also reawakened a need within me to better understand the world these children live in which was key in choosing a Psychology major in pursuit of my Bachelor’s degree (and beyond, God willing). My hope and prayer is that my degree will better equip me in my volunteer work.

I think what helped the most with Upgrade is their flexibility and availability. I'm a full time employee but if needed, I could attend informational sessions late in the afternoon or even on Saturday mornings. They are constantly updating their Facebook page so information is current and you don't miss any deadlines. I also appreciated that my advisor kept in contact with me throughout my classes (even now as I'm enrolled at UIW for my Bachelors) - her emails to me always included two very important things - encouragement & resources!

What advice would you give to someone who is contemplating returning to college? If getting your degree becomes more than a passing thought and stubbornly stays embedded in your brain even though time passes (months and even years) – then it may be your inner self’s way of helping you understand that perhaps getting your degree is actually a deep desire of yours and that you shouldn’t give up on it. If that is the case, I say go for it! Present your goal to God. I presented this to Him in a letter I read while praying – I was very specific in what I would need (i.e., elimination of the fear of failure, motivation to succeed, lots of patience with myself, support of family and of course resources to pay for school) and what I found out is that all I (or any of one of us) have to do is simply ask and trust Him to provide. I should have started on a prayer years ago!



Christine Quintana pictured with her two children, Steven & Mariah.