

First & Last Name: Victoria Casanova

Anticipated Graduation Date & College: Graduated May 2018 with AA from Northwest Vista College, will complete bachelors by May 2021 (or sooner) with Western Governors University Texas.

Educational, Career & Personal Goals: First, I would like to obtain a Bachelor's Degree in Accounting. I would like to advance in my current organization and work in the Accounting Department. I want to be financially stable for my family.

My educational journey: After I graduated high school in 2003, I went to college for a year. I excelled in the program I enrolled; however, I did not have a passion for the medical field. I decided to join the workforce to give me an idea of where I wanted my future to go. I would always keep college in the back of my mind, but I did not have the motivation to "start all over".

In 2013, I found myself as a single parent of a newborn. I knew my responsibility was to provide for her and do all I could. I felt the best way to grow into a good career is to go back to school. A few years later, I saw a segment on the local news about a program for working adults returning to college. I searched for Upgrade and made an appointment with Lowell.

Lowell helped me get on a path to college. He would keep constant contact with me and made sure I began attending school. He offered resources of colleges that I could attend. The most effective advice I received from Lowell was to complete my core curriculum first. While completing the required courses, I could get an idea of what major to pursue.

In 2015 I registered for school. It was not easy. I was a single mother working full time and being a full-time student. While attending school, Lowell would often contact me to see my progress. He eventually sent a message that he was moving on to a different project, but assured me that he wanted the best for me. I appreciated his final message, and the time he took to help me find my way through to get back into college. He also provided me with names of associates I could contact at Upgrade. Through all the difficult nights, and the tense testing, in May 2018, I graduated with an Associate's Degree from Northwest Vista College. I felt proud and achieved.

After graduation, I decided to take a year off and focus on my daughter's first grade year. In the end of 2018, I made the decision to return to school. I had toured a few institutes; however they only offered in-person courses. I was looking for online education. In January 2019, I contacted an Upgrade Representative. Upgrade has always offered me so many resources; I knew I couldn't search on my own. I made an appointment with Micaela Rios. She had given me information about a few college choices that I didn't know existed. One school was just down the street from my work. At my appointment, she researched more schools and filtered the search to fit my needs. She gave me outstanding advice. She showed me how to see my financial aid limit, she printed a list of colleges with their contact information, and she gave me a list of questions to ask college representatives. That list turned out to be the most helpful resource. The list had questions I would have never thought of. She also came up with questions that would benefit me and the path I want to take. Micaela also sent me a presentation created by Lowell about the school I was considering to attend.

Now, I am registered to attend a college. May 1st I will begin my journey to obtaining a Bachelor's Degree in Accounting with WGU-Texas.

A few years ago, I did not think this was an option for me, but here I am. Michaela has also kept in contact with me. She has sent me resources, and has sent me scholarship information for the school I will be attending. The Upgrade staff has shown me that their duties do not stop when we enroll into a school; their duties don't even stop once we've graduated. They have this persistent desire to help us achieve what we can and continue to what we can't even imagine. They have shown me that I am not alone on this journey. They have made themselves available to me when I need guidance.

My advice to someone thinking about returning to college: Contact Upgrade and attend all the seminars you can. The information is helpful and their resources are unlimited.

Do not ever think you cannot. If your mind thinks you can't, then you won't. But when you believe that you can, you will find that your abilities are more than your thoughts and you will have others that support you. It will not be easy; but "nothing great comes easy, and nothing easy can ever equate to greatness".



Diana y Víctor: Gracias por su apoyo, amor y dedicación.

Thanks to family, friends, neighbors, and coworkers for your support.

Thank God for making it all possible and for an amazing year!

Chantel: never give up! Thank you for your patience, your cheerfulness, and being my motivation!!!