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# From BCC to Stanford ASAP

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Brittany Arboleda (right) with her fellow BCC Kaplan Scholarship recipients Welbeck Adjetey Sowah (center) and Alberto Alberto (left)

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"Bronx Community College is important to me because it was a place where I felt comfortable taking a chance on my dreams," says Brittany Arboleda, 21, who received her Associate of Arts in sociology during BCC's 56th Commencement ceremonies on June 3. What's the next stop for this high achiever? Stanford University in Palo Alto, California, among the most competitive schools in the country.

Born and raised in New York City, the daughter of Dominican parents, there was a time when it seemed like the world and even Arboleda herself had given up on her future. "I thought I was done with education," she says. "I dropped out of high school, and I figured I already messed up my life, so what's really the point?"

But like so many BCC students before her, Arboleda found the strength to reinvent herself and take the all-important first step. "I got my GED," she says, "and I came to BCC and saw that I could be accepted in a community like this. I can actually be in an environment where I can learn. People appreciated what I had to say in a classroom setting. I felt I was with like-minded individuals and I was in the right place for me."

Crucial to Arboleda's success was her involvement with the Accelerated Studies in Associate Programs initiative — better known as ASAP. A comprehensive student support system, ASAP provided Arboleda with everything from MetroCards and book money to intense tutoring and advisement. First launched in 2007, ASAP at Bronx Community College has proven so successful in increasing graduation rates that BCC has been chosen by The City University of New York as one of the first CUNY institutions to undergo a major ASAP expansion, which started in the fall 2015 semester, that will make it possible for the program to reach far more students.

High-achieving BCC students also make their mark outside of the classroom, and Arboleda is no exception. During her years at the college, she served as vice president of the Phi Theta Kappa International Honor Society of Community Colleges and the president of the Sociology Club. At the same time, she kept her grade point average high enough to qualify for the dean's list.

Arboleda is one of three BCC Broncos this year to receive a Kaplan Scholarship, which provides financial support and skills training to help community college students make the leap to a four-year school and a bachelor's degree. "Before the Kaplan Scholarship, I would never have considered applying to all these top schools," Arboleda says. "It opened my horizons and made me think 'Hey, you can do it. It's not a far off dream. It's not for somebody else; it's for you as well.'"

Arboleda's ultimate dream is to obtain a Ph.D. in public health. She is passionate about improving the living environment in underserved communities and aspires to a career as a professor in the public health field.

Arboleda is living proof that Bronx Community College is the home of the second chance.