



Told She Was ‘Not College Material’, a Student Proves Them Wrong at Hostos

Having been born blind in Estelí, Nicaragua, Liliete López never had a chance to go to school in her native country. Although she realized at a very early age her vision would never improve, Liliete refused to let this stand in the way of her education. In 1990, she moved to the United States with her mother, a sister and a



Liliete López (Hostos Class of January 2010) and Professor Michael Stimola, Hostos Community College Director of Services for Students with Disabilities.

brother to reunite with her father. After undergoing a liver transplant, from 1992 to 1998 she attended Lighthouse International, a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving sight and helping people of all ages overcome the challenges of vision loss. Through its clinical and educational services, research, and advocacy, the Lighthouse enables people with low vision and blindness to lead safe, independent and productive lives.

In spite of being told repeatedly that she was “not college material,” Liliete was determined to go to college. After earning her GED in 2005, she enrolled at Eugenio María de Hostos Community College of The City University of New York (CUNY) in August of 2006. Having graduated from Hostos with an A.A. degree in liberal arts and science in January of 2010, Liliete is now pursuing a bachelor’s degree in political science at Queens College of CUNY.

“Liliete was one of the first students I met when I became President of Hostos in the summer of 2009,” said Dr. Félix V. Matos Rodríguez. “Because this college was originally created for those who have encountered significant barriers to higher education, it gave her exactly what she needed and deserved—the opportunity to succeed. Liliete’s accomplishments are proof of her innate abilities and the enduring importance of the Hostos mission of bringing down barriers, whatever they may be.”

As she became bilingual in English and Spanish at Hostos, Liliete gained the respect and admiration of the faculty, staff, and her fellow students by excelling in her studies and engaging in extracurricular activities, including the Leadership Academy, the Student Government Association, and the Student Ambassadors Program, an initiative that develops students’ leadership skills by combining theory with practical experience.

“At Hostos I was the first student with a disability to run for a position in the student government and the first one to win,” Liliete says proudly. “I was a student senator at Hostos, and today I am the treasurer of the CUNY Coalition of Students with Disabilities.”

“When I was serving as a senator in student government at Hostos, I had to attend many meetings,” she said. “It was very difficult for me to cope with my extracurricular activities and keep up with my homework at the same time. I needed a special computer, so this is why I reached out to Professor Carmen Mondesire-Alustiza from the College Discovery Program.”

Professor Montesire-Alustiza joined forces with Professor Michael Stimola, Director of Services for Students with Disabilities, Mercedes Moscat from the President’s Office, and Ramón M. Rodríguez, Esq., Interim Vice President for Institutional Development to determine how they might help Liliete cope with her mounting responsibilities.”



Ramón A. Rodríguez, Hostos Interim Vice President for Institutional Development, Liliete López and Edwin Caban II, Manager of Best Buy.

When an opportunity arose, Interim Vice President Rodríguez related Liliete’s story to Edwin Caban II, the manager of Best Buy, a retailer of technology and entertainment products and services at the Gateway Mall near the college. Praising Liliete as an outstanding Hostos graduate with special needs, IVP Rodríguez asked Caban to consider donating a computer to her. “The information I provided about Liliete’s challenges and accomplishments was all Mr. Caban needed to make the case for Best Buy giving her a specially equipped laptop computer,” said IVP Rodríguez.

Through the efforts of her friends, Hostos faculty and staff and Mr. Caban’s invaluable assistance, Liliete received her new laptop from Best Buy on Wednesday, March 10, 2010.

“Best Buy is always looking for ways it can better service the community, whether it be through donations or the participation of our associates in community events,” said Mr. Caban. “Ms. Liliete Lopez thanked us for the donation, but we should be thanking her for her devotion to studies and inspiring so many others to follow in her footsteps. We are thankful that we even had the opportunity to meet her and be able to have any impact in her life. We hope for her continued success and a continued partnership between Hostos and Best Buy.”

Thanks to the generosity of Pedro Maymí of the Division of Institutional Development, it came equipped with the software appropriate for her needs.

The new computer has made life much easier for Liliete and is enabling her to be even more productive as she continues her studies at Queens College.

“La computadora ha sido como una bendicion para mi. No tengo palabras para expresar mi agradecimiento”, said Liliete. [The computer has been a blessing for me. I do not have words to express how grateful I am for this.]

For more information about Hostos Community College, visit www.hostos.cuny.edu.