



# Friends of the Bardwell Scholarships

Spring-2015  
Issue 28

*Changing Lives One Degree at a Time*

## Bardwell Scholarships Celebrate 8 Graduates



**Jan Afungchi**  
AA, RN, Kent State  
University 2015



**Heriberto Bustos**  
BA, NEIU 2015



**Leonetta Clark**  
BA, Eastern IL University  
2015



**Tonja Girten**  
AA, HWC 2015



**Naila Opiangah**  
AA, HWC 2015



**Tamila Pashae**  
AA, HWC 2015



**Hugo Rodriguez**  
BA, Shimer College 2015



**Hafsatu Yakubu**  
AA, HWC 2015

# You Go, Hugo!

**I**t occurred on an early Tuesday morning, at 3:13 a.m. to be precise, while finishing up a paper on Picasso's Guernica. The paper was assigned to me, and me alone; I had to analyze his painting, his style, and his symbols, in a ten page paper and present it to the class later that afternoon. While typing some of my last thoughts, a revelation hit me: "I am graduating next week with a bachelor's degree." I could not believe that my academic career at a private four year institution was coming to an end. Yes, I would wear a cap and gown and walk across a stage soon. The countless times that I stayed up all night writing papers on paintings and the philosophies of Plato, Hegel, Marx, Foucault, Dante, Virgil, Galileo, Newton, and others, would soon be over.

I graduated from Harold Washington College in the Spring of 2011 with an Associate's Degree in Liberal Arts and a semester later, with the help of Hedy Cohen and Ellen Goldberg, transferred to Shimer College, a Great Books School, where I attentively took notes and avidly participated in intimate classes. Shimer College, like many other institutions of higher learning, provides its pupils with a foundation to launch into the world outside of our dorms and classrooms well-equipped. Tuition, books, and other fees, however, far exceeded the income that my minimum-wage job could finance. Despite my real socioeconomic struggles, the potential that staff and professors at Harold Washington College saw in me really flourished during my time at this private institution.

**More specifically, during my time at HWC, I met people who were to shape my academic trajectory for years to come. They were the ones who removed the emotional, moral, and financial rocks on my academic path. Most notably, Hedy Cohen and David Richardson were among the people who most believed in my potential as a reader, as a writer, and as an intellectual, despite my immigration status and my immediate economic hurdles to accessing higher education. My unquenchable thirst for knowledge, the need to surgically analyze philosophic argumentation, allowed me to successfully complete and surpass all of the requirements needed for graduation. The support and advice I received from people who witnessed my growth throughout my intellectual journey were as crucial to my education as the sleepless nights**

As graduation approaches, I am still amazed, astounded, flabbergasted, at how far an undocumented person can indeed go with the help of his family, the Roger Bardwell Family. I am an undocumented working-class person graduating from Shimer College with not one loan. I did it, but not alone.

*Hugo Rodriguez  
AA HWC 2010  
BA Shimer College 2015  
Bardwell Scholar*



*Sister and brother Yunuen and Hugo Rodriguez, both college graduates and Bardwell Scholars.*



*Hugo Rodriguez and Hedy Cohen, April 2015*

# Lifelong Learning

**M**y journey back to college began after being laid off in April 2009. I had begun to think about returning to school in the Fall of 2008. I even visited Daley College due to its close proximity to my employer at the time. However, I left feeling like this was not the college for me, and wondered if a 40 hour work week plus school were even a possibility.

**As I consider my experiences at the college, I reflect on how the essence of my being has been transformed because of its community, course work, and opportunity for economic advancement. From the student body, faculty, staff, to the administration Harold Washington College is filled with people who were willing to assist me to reach my goal and obtain my degree.**

As a non-traditional student, I questioned my role and how I would fit in with my younger classmates. I later realized those feelings were not so much about age, but more about starting over. My first classes were through the Continuing Education Department. As I continued to pursue a path that would offer me more than just a job, I was introduced to the Center for Creative Aging. Through the Center, I learned about the Gerontology program. Dr. Sammie Dortch taught the courses to a cohort of intergenerational students who were fascinating. The class material was stimulating and presented a deeper appreciation for the world and our elders who paved the way. I am truly blessed to be mentored by Dr. Dortch; she is insightful and inspiring to say the least. I will always cherish this experience as I am reminded of the value of living a life of meaning and purpose.

It was by way of Dr. Dortch that I was introduced to Hedy Cohen and the Roger Bardwell Scholarship. The Roger Bardwell Scholarship is a bridge that provided a clear passageway along my journey. Hedy often comments, “the scholarship didn’t do much to assist me”, however, the support I received is bigger than any financial award. We developed a friendship. With Hedy, I always knew I had someone cheering for me. She has been a beacon of constant support, encouraging me and every scholar to finish strong. When I considered dropping my classes in the Fall of 2014 due to my mother’s hospitalization, she was there to offer reassurance and a listening ear.

The Roger Bardwell Scholarship is not just a scholarship. It reminds us of the sacrifice and selfless act made by Roger Bardwell, the generosity of the donors’ who we appreciate and thank every semester, the students whom we shared experiences with that build into a family. This type of endowment is more than any scholarship.

I would like to thank the RBS and the HWC community with a special acknowledgement to Hedy Cohen, Dr. Sammie Dortch, Dr. John Hader and the staff in the Testing and Tutoring Center who have been an instrumental part of my success at the college. I am truly grateful.

*Tonja Girten  
AA HWC 2014  
Bardwell Scholar*



*Tonja Girten, HWC President Margie Martyn and Tamila Pashae at the Friends of HW Award Ceremony, May 2015*



*Hedy Cohen, Kevin Pleasant and Tonja Girten at CCC Graduation 2015*

# Realizing My Dream

After seven years chasing after a dream, it feels surreal that I can finally say I am a college graduate. It feels so good. The one quote that has taken me on this journey, one that I am happy to share is the following: “Sometimes I wonder what keeps me going; what drives my existence. Now, as I mature and proceed in life with the absence of my beloved mother; I am sure that she, as my universe, is my driving force...”

My parents immigrated to the United States when I was only 4 years old. We came from having only the shoes and clothes on our backs to living a comfortable life, thanks to my amazing parents. My story does not begin at the age of 4; instead it begins sometime at the age of 9. I still remember that day as it was yesterday. I was just a child and I still did not understand many things, but I did know something was wrong. My beloved mother was beginning to part from this world. I've been told you never get over the death of a loved one, you just learn to live with it. I could write a book about it because losing someone you love is a devastating event, but I will keep it short for the sake of my story.

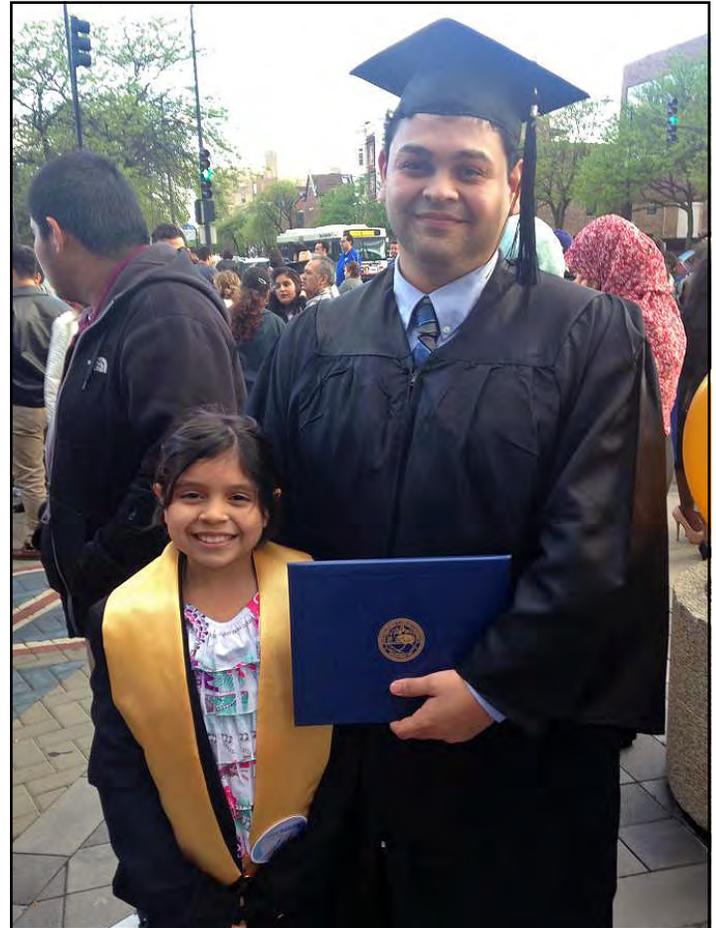
In high school I was a troubled teen. I did not know what I was doing or where I wanted to go in life. I often got into trouble and did not have respect for authority; I guess you could say that was a coping mechanism. Nevertheless, I succeeded in graduating high school with honors and with some amazing friends. Here is the shocker, when my story really begins to unfold, as I faced the harsh realities that most immigrants face when they decide to give the American dream a chance. I was told multiple times that I could not attend a secondary education institution because I did not have a 9-digit card, a social security card. Looking back, I often feel that this one particular number gave me more problems than it was worth. I decided that a number was not going to hold me back, that I had the potential to do great things in this temporary life I was given. Thankfully, I met amazing individuals along the way. **Among those individuals is the wonderful Hedy Cohen, whom was willing to give me a hand when the system failed me.** Now, as I look forward to walking the stage and moving to bigger and much more challenging goals, I can say with utmost certainty that I have made my mother proud.

*Heriberto Bustos*

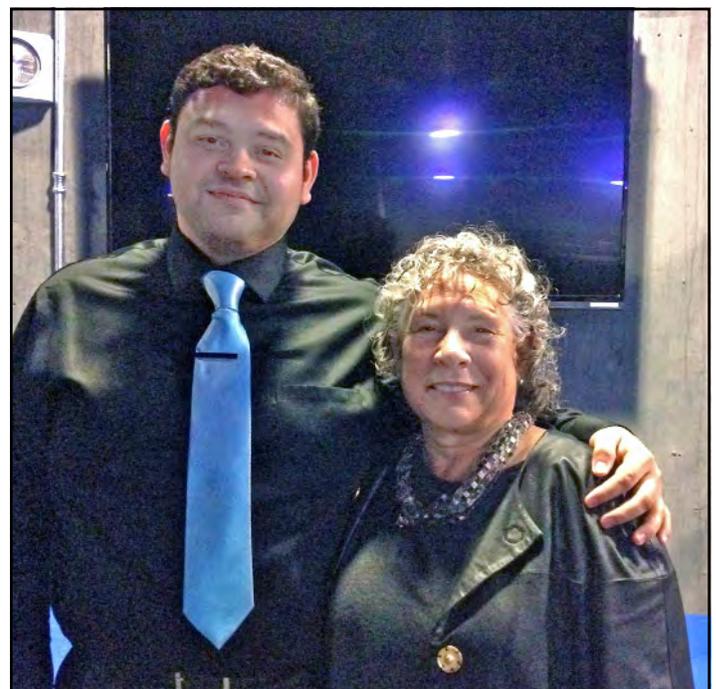
*AA HWC 2012*

*BS Northeastern Illinois University 2015*

*Bardwell Scholar*



*Heriberto Bustos and his niece, Brianna, at NEIU Graduation, May 2015.*



*Heriberto Bustos and Hedy Cohen at Noche de Estrellas at NEUI. Heri spoke on behalf of the graduating seniors.*

# Dreams of Building A New Gabon

I come from Gabon, a small country in central Africa whose literacy rate is around 89%. It is a pleasing fact when we know that the average literacy rate in sub-Saharan Africa is around 63%. However it does not depict the sad reality in getting an education there. I graduated from high school in 2011 with dreams and hopes of studying architecture here in the US. My will to study here came not only from the fact that there is no institution or program that teaches architecture in the whole country but also because our education system faces tremendous issues. I strongly believed that my fate was to come here that is why I was willing to wait as long as it took to get my paperwork and my parent's finances ready. A year and a half later I came in Chicago and my collegial adventure started.

When I came in the US, I did not know exactly where I would study as I was entering an ESL school to learn English. After few months there I felt ready to start college but my financial situation was not stable enough to apply to a 4-year college. I was advised to start in a community college and I picked HWC because it had an architecture department and it was downtown. **I still think that coming in HWC has been the best decision I took in my life.** What I received and gained from it was beyond my expectations. Not only did I benefit from the support of teachers and faculty members but also I gained tremendous knowledge in my field of study and all the other classes I took. When I say that teachers and faculty supported me, it was not just an academic support but way much more. HWC was and still is like family for me especially the architecture department. I was on campus 6 days per week and wish I could be there on Sundays as well. The flexibility and accessibility of the studio labs and equipment eased my learning experience. In fact, I was not fortunate enough to buy many school supplies for the architecture studio courses, but the department provided so many resources that I was able to complete my assignments and models even when I had almost nothing financially. My teachers and tutors were so involved that every time I think about them I feel blessed because I never witnessed this level of commitment.

I am grateful to HWC for carrying me through to the completion of my associate's degree and for giving me the basis of a great education. I am thankful to all the

people who participated in my learning experience, the students, teachers, and faculty members especially John Madsen, Don Laackman, Hedy Cohen, Angela Guernica, Dolores Ochoa, Josh McWilliams and Jonathan Hardy.

*Naila Opiangah  
AA HWC 2015  
Bardwell Scholar*



*Naila Opiangah shows details of the model of Olive-Harvey College which she created with other architecture students.*



*Naila Opiangah, May 2015*



# Bardwell Luncheon

Our 2015 Annual RBS Luncheon was in one word, **inspirational**. Guests gathered in a spacious room on the eleventh floor of HWC, with ceiling high windows that provided a scenic backdrop of skyscrapers sprinkled across downtown Chicago. Our guests walked into a room pleasantly decorated with fresh spring flowers. In the front of the room were musicians who performed throughout the luncheon and towards the far end of the room, there were tables covered in food, a feast consisting of pizza, fried rice, exquisite tiramisu, and many other dessert options.

With full plates, the scholars mingled with donors and special guests. We shared stories, networked and spoke of our personal achievements. During this time Hedy Cohen, the founder and executive director of RBS, introduced Lawana Loving, a RBS recipient, who captivated us with her personal journey from teenage mother to DePaul graduate. Shredding down any obstacles coming her way, Lawana reached her goal of obtaining a bachelor's degree, and informed us she next plans to pursue her master's degree! Throughout the lunch, we laughed, conversed, and swapped stories with other RBS scholars we had not seen for a while due to our hectic schedules.

One by one, the RBS recipients stood and spoke about their educational goals and achievements. A few speakers included Tamilla Pasha, Sunday Joseph, Riley Jones, and myself. Many of us mentioned our gratitude to Ms. Cohen who mentors us without reluctance and believes in us. We mentioned Mr. Roger Bardwell himself, who continues to educate and inspire us. In addition, we thanked our donors, because without them, this wouldn't be a reality.

The Annual Luncheon was a space full of love, appreciation, intelligence, perseverance, and in one word, **inspiration**. RBS would like to give a special thanks to Alba Orizaba, her mom Rosaura Correa, Heriberto Bustos, Johnny Phan, Larissa Mares, and all dessert donors, for their aid in organizing our 2015 Annual Luncheon.

*Larissa Mares*  
*Bardwell Scholar*



*Shelley Sutherland, Hedy Cohen, Susan Sidell, Joan Habinek, Shirlene Ward*



*Sunday Joseph, Margarita Chavez, Alba Orizaba, Heriberto Bustos Back-Charles McSweeney*



*RBS Gale Washington, David Work, Leonetta Clark*

# Year, Spring 2015



*Hafsi Yakubu and Ellen Goldberg*



*RBS Lawana Loving gives the opening remarks.*



*Tamila Pashae and Jill Lending*



*Matt Shevitz, Chris White, Cory Biggerstaff, Corey Willoby, and Asim Allakim*

## 2015 Bardwell Scholars



*Tony Foster, Debra Hawthorne, Leonetta Clark, Asim Allakim, Gale Washington, Sunday Joseph, Lawana Loving, David Work, Naila Opiangah, Cassandra Bunyard, Tamila Pashae, Larissa Mares, Riley Jones*

# With Gratitude

Over the years, I often thought what I would say when my turn came to write my graduation piece for the Roger Bardwell Scholarship newsletter. I would occasionally lie awake at night and think of the best paragraphs to write, so as the time got closer for me to write, I reflected on the years and effort spent in getting to this point. I realized a common theme was gratitude. I had to offer my thanks and recognize many key people. With that in mind, I will say that I'm not supposed to be here.

I am a classic example of a kid who beat the odds. I was the oldest of five children, and during my 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade year, my mother developed an all-consuming drug addiction, with which she still struggles today. When I found out, I was very hurt and deeply affected. I barely made it out of high school; I would stay home from class whenever I felt like it and baby sit my youngest sister. I did exceptionally well in the classes I liked, including French and English Lit, but I failed the classes I didn't like, or those I found too challenging, like Math and Science. I had to attend summer school to make up credits. I often look back and wonder how I made it without becoming a teen mom or getting into trouble, as my younger brother and the baby sister did.

I realize I only had the foundation that mom had set for me before her spiral into drugs. I also had my maternal aunt and grandmother, who did their best to support us in the emotional, and, at times, physical absence of my mother. I thank my beloved Aunt Leslie and my late grandmother Velma for their support and guidance. I also thank my paternal grandmother, Geneva, who was unwavering in her support. The three of them often baby sat for my daughter as I worked and juggled classes at HWC.

I continue to hold in highest regard, the faculty, administrators and friends I made at HWC. People like Profs. Myra Cox, Larnell Dunkley, Don Elligan, Jashid Fakhrid-Deen, (he of slope fame), Domenico Ferri, Marcy Rae Henry, Kurt Sheu, Ray Tse, Athan Vouzianas, Susan Wohlmuth, and the best Child Development teacher-ever, Jen Asimow! I loved-LOVED working at HWC as the administrators were so supportive of any employee who wished to further his/her education. In addition to John Wozniak who set a tone at the college that encouraged education, I have to acknowledge others like George Bickford, Wendell

Blair, Anna Blum, Patricia Cuevas, John Hader, John Metoyer, supporters of PTK, Charles McSweeney and Devon Powell, and more recent supporters of RBS, Don Laackman and Margie Martyn.

**At HWC I was so lucky to have the best supervisors I've ever been fortunate to work for. I have so much respect for Mary Kaleta and Anna Koomalsingh and I'm thankful for their continued friendship and support. I had many friends who always had kind words of encouragement and just a way of brightening my days, especially when things were not going so well. This group includes Clotilde Mayfield, Alysandra Cruz-Bond, Linda Feil, Angela Berry, Valetta Buckner, Heather and Matt Shevitz, Tasha Peterson, Luis Perez, Mike Russell, the staff of the VP's office, the Registrar's office, the Business office and Admissions/Advising. You can see that from the top floor to the bottom, from the President to janitors, my education and employment at HWC still holds a very special place in my heart; so many people there made an impact on me. There are many more to thank at HWC but lack of space means I could not possibly mention them all. I have also had wonderful professors and experiences at both DePaul and Eastern Illinois University.**

While it may be a cliché to say that none of us are alone in this thing we call life, I truly know this to be case as I have had so much help. My family, and best friends Dawn Blocker, Elizabeth Dixon, and the Pratcher's, are so dear to me as are my St. Margaret of Scotland friends, Rev. Dan Mallette, the Women's Club and my "fairy-godmothers" Jean Bell, Gladys Cunningham and Cynthia Levy. My daughter Mia, who is just now starting her college years, has been a source of motivation as I tried to make her life better than my own and show her that hard work pays off. This Mother's Day, Mia told me she is so proud of me for "Sticking with the college thing." Thank you, Mia, for loving me and encouraging me to turn off Scandal or The Good Wife and study!

I can not end this story without thanking Ellen Goldberg, the many donors and supporters of RBS, and a beautiful lady, Hedy Cohen, who remained positive even as I cried in her office or on the phone, barely able to talk through the tears of disappointment and hardship. Through her

## (With Gratitude Cont'd)

persistence and encouragement and that of so many others, I just kept my chin up and continued toward my goals. I hope to enter a master's program this fall and I know I will have the support of all of you.

Where ever you are in life, whatever your socioeconomic status, whatever goals you have achieved big or small, you had help. We all do. I clearly recognize my cheering section and those who have helped me in ways big and small! Thank you one and all!

*Leonetta Clark*

*AA HWC 2010*

*BA Eastern Illinois University 2015*

*Bardwell Scholar*



*Leonetta Clark at graduation brunch, May 2015*



*Hafsi Yakubu and Hedy Cohen*

## In My Hand

Hello everyone. I am Hafsi Yakubu, a recent addition to the Bardwell Scholarship family. I will be graduating from Harold Washington College by May 2015. Here is how I started. I will never forget my first day in the United States. I was standing in line at the grocery store holding a bunch of banana in one hand, and small pieces of green paper in my other. To buy the food, I needed to know how to use the money. I was only able to use my hands to hold conversations. This was not because I could not speak; it was because I could not speak in English. The only way to gain the knowledge that I needed was to go to school, and that is exactly what I did. Education bestowed upon me what I did not have in hand before. Possessing knowledge has given my life purpose from which I and society will profit.

Education in the United States has been challenging because I am in a new environment. At first, I did not understand the language. Enrolling in literacy classes taught me how to hold conversations. I succeeded in ESL courses. Then, I began at Harold Washington College. Here, I realized I am in need of financial help and that is when Bardwell Scholarships stepped into my life. Mrs. Hedy has helped me in so many ways because I am dedicated with my education, and I want to achieve my goal of owning an international interior design business and engaging with independent business owners. Moreover, I want to thanks Mrs. Hedy for helping me succeed in what I intend to do. **I needed an opportunity that will help me continue my education, and that is exactly what Bardwell Scholarships did.** Some people would forget where they started from, but I will always remember the day Mrs. Hedy saw fit to help me with what has proven to be the push that made my last semester at Harold Washington College possible. Thank you Mrs. Hedy and God bless Bardwell Scholarships.

*Hafsatu Yakubu*

*AA HWC 2015*

*Bardwell Scholar*

## From HWC to RN

I grew up in Kumba, a medium sized city in Cameroon. It's a very rural area in West Africa with dirt roads, poor water supply, and limited career opportunities. I attended the Regional Maritime Academy in Accra, Ghana and worked as a maritime engineer on an oil tanker, but quickly realized it was not my calling. Then in my early twenties I had the opportunity to volunteer with the Cameroon American AIDS Alliance working alongside Dr. Bernard Blaauw who had traveled to Cameroon from Chicago. I didn't know it at the time, but this would be the catalyst for big changes in my life.

When Dr. Blaauw learned of my interest in continued education and travel abroad, he offered to host me in Chicago. I began applying to colleges and was accepted into HWC. The early days were difficult because my work options were limited and school expenses were significant for an international student.

Eventually I started to build a network in Chicago. I began by volunteering for a soccer and education program, Urban Initiatives, which provides a work-to-play program for inner city schools. Contacts there connected me to Educational Endeavors where I was able to tutor kids as part of a work study program. And finally Eric Davis from Educational Endeavors introduced me to Hedy Cohen and the Bardwell Scholar family. **The Bardwell Scholarship provided not only financial assistance, but also a critical source of support and guidance when living so far from my family.** With this help I graduated from HWC with my associate's degree in 2012 and transferred to the nursing program at Kent State University in Ohio.

In 2012, I also got married to my wife whom I met through the Urban Initiatives program. We've been blessed with a wonderful and energetic daughter, Sylvia. While chasing Sylvia often feels like a full time job, I have also been able to complete my nursing program. This May, I graduated with my Associate's Degree in Nursing as a Registered Nurse from KSU.

Without the support of the Bardwell Scholarship and Mama Hedy's continued encouragement, it would have been very difficult to reach this point in my life. I will always be grateful for this support and hope to stay connected to the program and help upcoming Bardwell Scholars.

*Jan Afungchwi*

*AA HWC 2012*

*AA Kent State University 2015*

*RN Kent State University 2015*

*Bardwell Scholar*

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*Jan Afungchwi at Kent State graduation, May 2015*



*Jan Afungchwi, RN 2015*

Visit us on the web at  
[www.rogerbardwellscholarship.org](http://www.rogerbardwellscholarship.org)

# Flying Without Wings

Dear Roger:

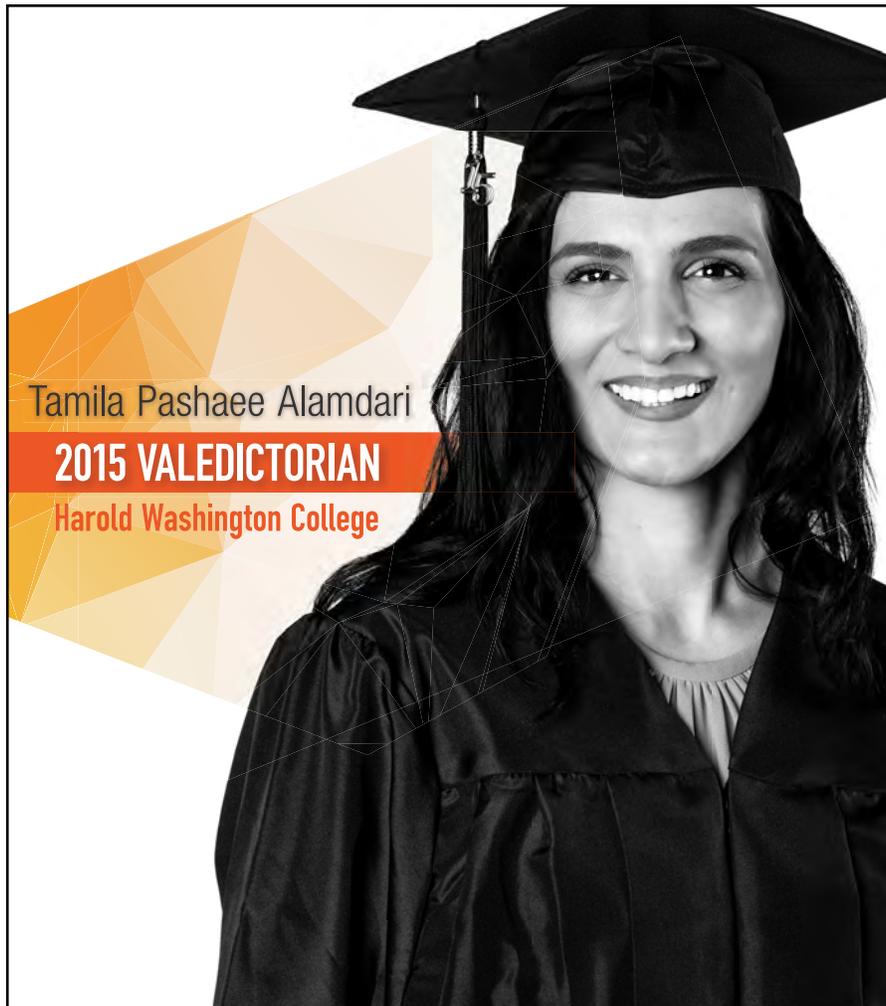
I will never forget the moment I stepped in to Harold Washington College. I was on an escalator and I was crying. I was so afraid of my decision. I was restarting my education after a 15 year hiatus, in another country, and in another language. I had no family around and no financial support. I missed my son badly at that moment and I was afraid of failing and disappointing him. I just whispered, "God, are you seeing me? Are you hearing me? I have a dream of flying without wings. Help me." I am sure you were sitting beside God at that moment and you said to him, "I'll call Hedy to ask her and our friends to take care of Tamila. I am sure Hedy will be there for Tamila more than her own family. My friends on earth will give her the best wings ever." And they did... This is a part of a letter I wrote to Roger Bardwell. The RBS organization worked like a miracle to me.

I said to myself, "Tamila just concentrate and do your best to protect your son and your dreams, all others will follow." And I did. I will leave Harold Washington

College on May 6<sup>th</sup>. I will leave this lovely place with big differences. On August 2013 a lonely woman from Iran stepped into this college with big dreams in mind but nothing official to prove it. People here believed in her and listened to her eyes. They gave her wings to fly and reach the sky.

On May 6<sup>th</sup> 2015 a woman from Iran will leave this great place with a 4.0 GPA and an outstanding resume. Moreover, she graduated as the Valedictorian of the class of 2015. She will prove that, whatever happened to you in your life, two years of hard work is enough to open a new chapter in your life. Tamila will never forget this place and she is totally aware of her responsibility. She has to protect her son, her dreams, and her golden wings. Thank you all.

*Tamila Pashae*  
*AA HWC 2015*  
*2015 HWC Valedictorian*  
*Bardwell Scholar*





*Hedy Cohen, Foxy Williger, and Susan Sidell at Cubs game, 2014*

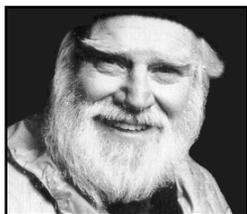
It is with much sadness that Bardwell Scholarships note the passing of one of their most enduring supporters and contributors, Irwin "Foxy" Williger. Foxy's generosity was apparent in his ongoing contributions and his acknowledgment of the work that RBS does.

Just shy of his 102<sup>nd</sup> birthday, Foxy showed that education is never complete without a full and generous heart. We will miss him as a contributor and a friend.

Contributions, which are deductible to the extent the law allows, are always appreciated and enable us to continue this important work. Please ask your employer if they offer matching funds or corporate contributions to nonprofit organizations.

*(The Roger W. Bardwell Scholarship Fund is a registered 501(C)3 tax exempt organization)*

Contributions to the Roger W. Bardwell Scholarship Fund may be made by check and sent to:



**Bardwell Scholarship NFP**

**1204 Monroe  
Evanston, IL 60202**

**or**

**donate on our website through Pay Pal**



CITY COLLEGES of CHICAGO

**Harold Washington**

Education that Works

For further information, or if you know someone who might be a candidate for a Bardwell Scholarship, please contact Hedy Cohen:

Roger W. Bardwell Scholarship Fund, Harold Washington College  
30 E. Lake St., Room 1139 Chicago, IL 60601 (312) 553-3049

***[www.rogerbardwellscholarship.org](http://www.rogerbardwellscholarship.org)***

Roger W. Bardwell Scholarship Fund  
Harold Washington College  
30 E. Lake St., Room 1139  
Chicago, IL 60601  
(312) 553-3049  
*[www.rogerbardwellscholarship.org](http://www.rogerbardwellscholarship.org)*

