

A man with a beard, wearing a bright pink suit, stands at a podium with a microphone, addressing a large audience of graduates in black gowns with green stoles. The background is filled with graduates, some looking towards the speaker. The scene is lit with warm, golden light, suggesting an indoor arena or auditorium.

**2026**

# COMMENCEMENT AND HONORS CEREMONY

*A Journey Not a Finish Line*

*For the Classes of Fall 2025,  
Spring 2026, Summer 2026*

**COLLEGE UNBOUND**

# A MESSAGE FROM ADAM & WENDELL

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Graduates, Families, and Friends:

A journey not a finish line. Graduates today chose that as their aphorism to sum up their learning. A story of lifelong learning that continues after today's ceremony and encompasses stories of exploration, struggle, inquiry, and community long before College Unbound as well.

This journey was not just yours, but completed with deep support from family and friends, so many of whom are here today with us. College Unbound was created for learners like you - brilliant and awesome who needed an institution that would see all of who you are and stand in partnership with you.

Everything worth doing is worth doing together. That's the only way to make substantive and lasting change. College Unbound was built with that ethic, and the work we will continue to do - in this moment and beyond - will always be grounded in a spirit of learning from and seeing one another. It's wonderfully hard, critically important, and also a practice of learning filled with love and care. We are grateful to be here today and together with you.

In love & struggle,

**Adam Bush**  
PRESIDENT

**Wendell Pritchett**  
CHAIR, BOARD OF TRUSTEES



# PROGRAM & AWARD WINNERS

Programa  
En Español



## Procession

A Message from the Board of Trustees

Welcome Remarks

Presentation of Big 10 Honors and Degrees

Fighting for Justice Award

Faculty Unbound Award

Alumni Award

President's Awards

Spotlight Moment

Turning of the Tassel

Recessional

## Fighting For Justice

The William C. Clifton Fighting for Justice Award is named in honor of the Honorable William C. Clifton, the state's first African American District Court Judge. Judge Clifton was a lifelong advocate for justice and equity and is also the husband of the Honorable Rogeriee Thompson, one of CU's founding board members. This award is presented annually at CU's Commencement ceremonies to recognize a graduating student who has demonstrated outstanding dedication to advancing justice and equity within their community. The recipient will be someone who actively challenges systemic barriers, advocates for marginalized voices, and contributes to meaningful change through leadership, activism, or service.

**Deannett Cruz**, *Rhode Island*

**Fanisha Terry**, *Washington*

**Kenneth Day**, *Rhode Island ACI*

**Pamela Ingram**, *Mid-Atlantic*

**Stanley Howard**, *Chicago*

**Quentoria Jones**, *South Carolina*

**Renaldo Hudson**, *Chicago*

## Faculty Unbound Award

In alignment with College Unbound's mission to reinvent higher education for adult learners, this award will acknowledge two members of CU's faculty (one lab faculty and one instructional faculty) who through their teaching and engagement with students have redefined the learning experience for CU's diverse student community.

**LaSheena Riley-Duval**,  
*Lab Faculty*

**Kristyna Underwood**,  
*Instructional Faculty*

## Alumni Award

This award recognizes graduates who continue to embody the mission, vision, and founding principles of College Unbound through their leadership, lifelong learning, and contributions to their communities.

**Danette Briggs**

# CLASS OF 2025 SUMMER GRADUATES

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**Shannon Marie Lane**  
**MID-ATLANTIC**

I'd always wanted to go back to school and finish my degree. It was a promise that I made to myself many years ago. Then as we all know, life gets busy. So my dream of attaining my B.A. seemed to get further and further away. Then I was presented the opportunity to attend College Unbound through my employer and I jumped at the chance! The staff and my cohort instructor we're always ready to help. My time at C.U. has prepared me for my life's next journey and I couldn't be happier!!



**Colleen Carpenter**  
**RHODE ISLAND**



**Sharice Thompson**  
**MID-ATLANTIC**

# CLASS OF 2025 FALL GRADUATES

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**Alice "Ally" Lewis**  
**WASHINGTON**

College Unbound didn't just educate me; it helped me heal. By addressing the unnamed educational traumas of my past, I was able to find the clarity to pursue my Master's degree. Being the first in my family to reach this level of education allows me to open doors for others to do the same. Thank you, College Unbound, for seeing the 'whole person' and turning education into a therapeutic, life-changing experience.



**Almitra L. Refile**  
**MID-ATLANTIC**

College Unbound changed how I see myself. I no longer view my past challenges as setbacks, but as proof of my strength and resilience. What once felt like interruptions, I now understand were preparation. This journey showed me that I am capable, focused, and unstoppable. My past did not hold me back. It built the foundation that pushed me forward.



**Angela Nieves Rivera**  
**MID-ATLANTIC**

College Unbound transformed how I see myself and my potential. I once questioned whether my past challenges limited me, but I now recognize they built my resilience, leadership, and strength. I graduate with more than a degree. I leave with confidence, clarity, and the courage to lead on my own terms.



**Anjela C Rush**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

The Bible tells us that we can do all things through Christ who gives us strength. That was hard to believe when you've experienced failure in every area of your life. College Unbound taught me how to change those failures into successes. Now I see myself as resilient, courageous, confident and a person who can do all things through Christ.



**Anton Ricco Booker**  
**SOUTH CAROLINA**

College Unbound helped me grow in my academic journey and showed me that I can achieve anything I set my mind out to do. College Unbound sees you for who you are, where you are going and who you are trying to become in the future.



**Azhane Marjorie Ann Hazard**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

Reflecting on my time at CU, I recognize the profound impact it has had on shaping my present and future. The enriching learning environment fostered a deep passion for continued education, and I am grateful for the transformative experiences I encountered. Though I cherish the memories and growth I experienced at CU, I acknowledge that my journey has led me onward. I have evolved as a learner, a parent, a partner, and, most importantly, into the accomplished woman I am today.



**Bonnie Piekarski**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

They have made me see how important my life experience has been.



**Charlene Cham-Rhau**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

My journey at College Unbound transformed how I see myself—I no longer question my capacity; I own my calling as a leader and change-maker. What once felt like obstacles, I now recognize as evidence of resilience, strength, and purpose. This experience didn't just earn me a degree—it deepened my belief in who I am and what I'm capable of becoming.  
**Phil. 4:13**



**Dalmira Fortes**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

College Unbound has not only opened the doors to new opportunities but also broadened my perspective how I view the world and what it means to be a true leader. I used to think I wanted to be a boss but now I aspire to be a leader who leads by example



**Darcy T. Gross**  
**MID-ATLANTIC**

Online learning use to scare me but College Unbound too that fear away by creating a supportive and welcoming environment. This allowed me to dig deep down within myself to pull out the greatness that was buried inside of me. Moving forward, nothing or nobody can stop me because I am one of Gods favorite.



**David Allen Dale**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

College Unbound has helped me truly “see me” by reframing my life experiences as strengths instead of setbacks. As someone who grew up navigating family incarceration, worked third shift security, and built a career in education from the ground up, I used to just see survival; I now see resilience, leadership, and vision. CU has helped me recognize that my lived experience as a father, educator, and community leader is not separate from my academic identity but central to it.



**David Nadeau Jr.**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

CU helped me discover an inner strength I didn't know I possessed. Through the unwavering support of my professors and staff, I found the courage to speak my truth and transform it into a tool for change. As an adult learner balancing responsibilities beyond school, I learned that I am capable of more than I ever believed. Today, I move forward with clarity and purpose. For that, I am truly grateful.



**Demetrius Pierre Weaver**  
**MID-ATLANTIC**

My experiences helped me recognize that the work I've been doing—mentoring youth, creating programming for young people in my community of origin, producing The Mental Exchange podcast, and authoring The Mental Exchange mental health journal—is meaningful and impactful. I no longer question whether I belong in academic spaces; I understand that I bring real value to them. My past challenges are no longer doubts—they are the foundation that fuels my purpose and passion thanks to CU.



**Destine Alvarez-Metoyer**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

College Unbound has helped me see myself as capable in ways I hadn't fully recognized before. Through the program, I've learned that my life experiences and past challenges are not setbacks, but strengths that shape how I show up academically and professionally. CU pushed me to reflect on my story, own it, and see the resilience and leadership skills I've developed along the way. I now have more confidence in my voice, my abilities, and my capacity to set and achieve meaningful goals.



**De'Vonte' Parson**  
**WASHINGTON**

I didn't believe I can come from a project kid to convict then top Bachelors graduate. My expectations of myself was low at a point and Graduating CU raised the bar for me.



**Diaritssa Abreu**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

Empowering others begins with understanding your own journey. At College Unbound, I learned to confront the stories I told myself about my past and rewrite them with compassion and confidence. What once felt like heavy struggles became proof of perseverance, and the doubts that silenced me became fuel. Now, I stand fully in my purpose, knowing my voice and experiences are exactly what qualify me to lead and uplift others.



**Ebony Lane**  
**CHICAGO**

College Unbound has helped me see myself better, by reframing my life experiences as strengths rather than setbacks. It has pushed me to see my abilities not as limited by my past, but expanded because of it. I now approach obstacles with a stronger sense of purpose and capability, understanding that my lived experience is a powerful foundation for growth and leadership.



**Gabriela Quinche**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

I used to question my academic abilities, but CU helped me realize that I am creative, resilient, and capable of leading meaningful change. Through projects rooted in my real-life passions—like creating inclusive programs for children and adults with disabilities—I began to see that my lived experiences are valuable expertise. CU shifted my perspective from self-doubt to confidence, helping me understand that my voice, faith, and vision belong in leadership spaces.



**Genice Barbosa**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

College Unbound helped me find the confidence within myself to succeed and want more for myself in my academic, professional and personal life.



**Gina Mari Silva**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

College Unbound helped me become more resilient and confident in myself. I now see my past challenges as strengths, not weaknesses. I have developed a positive attitude and believe in my ability to grow, overcome obstacles, and achieve my goals.



**Gioconda Heureaux**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

College Unbound helped me become more resilient and confident in myself. I now see my past challenges as strengths, not weaknesses. I have developed a positive attitude and believe in my ability to grow, overcome obstacles, and achieve my goals.



**Grace Baek Flores**  
**MID-ATLANTIC**

College Unbound has played a meaningful role in helping me grow my network. Through this organization, I found the confidence to share my story. It also helped me recognize that my lived experience holds value equal to any college credit. That shift in perspective strengthened both my voice and my purpose. With their support, I was able to earn my Bachelor's degree.



**Inelis Tifas**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

At College Unbound, I learned that growth requires effort and perseverance. This journey strengthened my discipline, broadened my perspective, and reinforced my commitment to my goals. Today, I graduate with pride, preparation, and the confidence to face new challenges.



**Iran Miliano**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

College Unbound has helped me see that I am stronger and more capable than I thought. I no longer see my past struggles with motherhood, work, and school as failures, but as proof that I can handle hard things. CU helped me believe that my story and my work, especially with EmpowerHER, truly matter.



**Ivone Michelle Sagastume**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

College Unbound has helped me see that my life experiences are strengths, not setbacks. I used to question whether I truly belonged in academic spaces, but CU showed me that my resilience and perseverance are powerful assets. I now view my past challenges as proof of my growth and capability. It's helped me believe in myself and recognize that I am worthy and capable of success.



**Jaylisa Perez**  
**MID-ATLANTIC**

College Unbound helped me grow into a confident leader who trusts my abilities and voice. Through tough reflection and strong academic guidance, the CU faculty pushed me to grow in ways I didn't expect. I'm deeply thankful for my family, friends and peers whose constant support carried me through. Because of all of them, I stand more confident and capable than ever before.



**Jessica González**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

Before college unbound, I walked the hallways of my school thinking that I did not belong! Now, I not only know that I belong in the space that I occupy, but since I do occupy that space it is my responsibility to make an impact and effect change one student at a time!



**Jessica Marrero Montal**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

College Unbound changed how I see myself. As an Afro-Latina woman raised in poverty, I thought I was just surviving. This journey taught me that my lived experience is wisdom and my pain had purpose. College Unbound made the impossible possible for me, and today I stand not just as a survivor, but as a scholar who knows I was worthy all along.



**Kenneth Day**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

College Unbound believes that education is a human right that should be afforded to everyone no matter what side of the street you walk on. Most of all, they understand that education is not a privilege but the highest form of rehabilitation and the key to reducing recidivism. I am proof that anything is possible and that you can rise above your circumstances when you refuse to become a product of your environment.



**Kristina Lachance**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

Attending CU has changed my life. I went from someone with zero confidence to someone who stands up for what is right.



**Lamont Taylor**  
**RHODE ISLAND**



**Latoya D. Clement**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

My experience at College Unbound changed how I see myself and my abilities. After initially stepping away from school in 2020/2021 due to fear, I returned to give myself a second chance and pursue my goals. CU helped me see my past challenges as strengths and build confidence in my voice. I am no longer afraid and feel empowered moving forward. Thank you to Family, friends and my cohort.



**Lei'Chelle Harris-Canada**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

CU helped me REALLY see myself – not just as a mom or staff member holding things together, but as a leader whose lived experience is knowledge. What I once understood as survival, I now recognize as the foundation of my advocacy, problem-solving, and relationship-building skills and confidence in my voice. I don't question whether I belong at the table anymore – I prepare for it, speak at it, and sometimes even build the table myself!



**Magdalia Almonte**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

My experience at CU, has transformed the way that I see myself, my challenges and my abilities. Before, obstacles were viewed as setback or limitations. Now I see them as an opportunity to learn.



**Makalah Marie Chapman**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

CU changed my life. For the first time, I believed I was allowed to dream big, loud, and without apology. I learned that success doesn't follow a clock, and purpose doesn't expire. The person who began College Unbound is not the person standing here now. For that I'll always be grateful.



**Marcus Lopes**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

Graduating from College Unbound has not only been important to me, but for my family. This is a major milestone achievement that proves to myself and my employer that I can accomplish whatever I set my mind to. It provides me with the qualifications to get better jobs, better pay, and break the cycle of incarceration. It proves the formally incarcerated can succeed in academia. Most importantly to me, it sets the example for my children, just like the examples set for me, that despite any challenges that may occur throughout life, it's never too late and you should never give up.



**Mark Steven Collett**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

I've been able to find so much strength and wisdom within myself that I knew I had but just didn't know how to bring it out and see you was able to help me find those ways to bring it out and bring out that confidence to be able to express it, but also be able to help Help teach it to others.



**Michelle Roman**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

College Unbound helped me see myself in a new way. I used to be afraid of change, and even though I wanted to go back to school, I didn't feel like I had the confidence. It made me realize I'm more capable than I give myself credit for. I found my voice, learned to trust myself, and I have Nathaly & Jose to thank for that!



**Mounia Baggari**  
**MID-ATLANTIC**

Before College Unbound, I saw my challenges as barriers and often doubted my abilities. Through this journey, I've come to see my experiences—especially as an immigrant — as strengths that shaped my resilience and purpose. College Unbound helped me find my voice and believe in my ability to create change. Today, I see myself as a confident leader and advocate, using my past not as a limitation, but as a foundation to support others and make an impact.



**Niuvi Miriam Liriano-Rivera**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

College Unbound has helped me see myself more clearly. Through each Big 10 reflection, I realized my life story is a success story in progress. It showed me that everything I've been through has counted for something. Most importantly, it helped me recognize my worth



**Noah Forsythe**  
**MID-ATLANTIC**

College Unbound not only gave me the education I needed to earn my degree, but also the confidence and motivation to become the best version of myself. This experience helped me recognize and reach my full potential. I'm incredibly grateful to everyone at CU and to my family for their constant support.



**Otto Munoz**  
**MID-ATLANTIC**



**Robbin Blake**  
**MID-ATLANTIC**

I was unsure as an adult learner if I would be able to handle work and school CU understood the assignment Their program provided me with the tools and support that I needed to become successful at completing and obtaining my degree



**Ruth Perez**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

College Unbound has allowed me to become the best version of my self. It challenged me and forced me to think outside the box. My cohort became my family and my professors became my mentors. It opened the door for new opportunity and horizons. Thanks to college unbound I landed a higher payer job and am creating my own business. You should always put education first and use it to create your own world. Thank you college unbound for all you have done. I can't wait to see what next.



**Samantha Dillon**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

College Unbound transformed how I see myself by helping me recognize that my lived experiences are strengths, not setbacks. I no longer view my past challenges as things that put me behind, but as evidence of resilience, leadership, and growth. Through reflection and storytelling, I gained confidence in my voice and realized I belong in academic and professional spaces. I now see myself not just as a survivor, but as a capable, educated, and empowered woman ready to lead and create change.



**Seth Chiaro**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

College Unbound helped me overcome challenges and encouraged me to reach new heights. With the help of my Cohort leader, Deb, I found my passion and what I want to pursue in life.



**Stephanie Maria Williams**  
**MID-ATLANTIC**

College Unbound has helped me truly see myself by showing me that my life experiences are not setbacks, but strengths. I've learned to value my journey, both the challenges and the growth, as meaningful and worthy of academic and professional recognition. My perspective has shifted from self-doubt to confidence, especially in my ability to lead, advocate, and create change for the youth I serve. CU has helped me understand that my voice, my story, and my purpose all have power.



**Tavares Lane Harrington**  
**CHICAGO**

"I Can Do all Things Through Christ who Strengthens me". College Unbound helped me truly see myself—not just through my past struggles, but through my purpose and potential. I came into CU carrying lived experiences shaped by hardship, community violence, and resilience, and I learned that those experiences were not setbacks but sources of leadership and wisdom. CU taught me that my story has power, my vision has value, and my journey is meant to create pathways for others.



**Terri Wynn**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

Before College Unbound, I mostly saw myself through my struggles especially losing my mother in 2015 and my grandmother in 2021. I was surviving, but I didn't always see my strength. Through College Unbound, I learned that my lived experiences are not weaknesses they're knowledge and leadership. I now see that my grief, my advocacy, and my life experience are part of what makes me capable. I don't just belong in these spaces I bring value to them. I'm capable than I give myself credit for.



**Tiffany Fernandes Dos Reis**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

My journey at College Unbound strengthened my confidence beyond what I imagined. Through every obstacle, I remained committed and demonstrated my resilience. I once doubted my academic abilities, but the unwavering support of the College Unbound community, along with the love and encouragement of my family and friends, changed that. Their faith in me helped me find faith in myself. Today, I'm proud not only of what I've achieved, but of who I've become. I am truly honored to be a CU graduate.



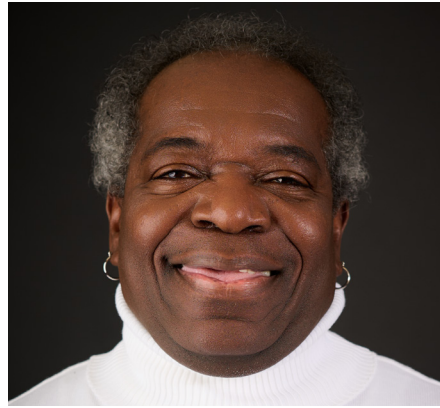
**Tomeka S Johnson**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

No. I've always believed in myself. I've known my abilities. I've always accepted challenges and found ways to overcome them.



**Troy Lamont Sanders Jr.**  
**MID-ATLANTIC**

I used to wonder what life would be like for me if I had not went back to school to obtain my Bachelors. Now that the time has come I see it was nothing but my faith and support system that kept me going even when I felt like giving up. Today I walk and receive this degree not only for myself but for all my loved one's resting that would have been here to share this moment with me.



**Tyrone O McKinney**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

I was well reserved about an agenda of continuing my education. I wasn't too concerned about more. Once I was presented with a great idea of a changed mind, agenda, and positive outcome of a leadership role in my life, I did just that!! I enrolled in CU, and I embraced the change and now I am looking forward to a prosperous agenda in my future career.



**Victor L. Lambert**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

College Unbound helped me see my lived experience as leadership, not liability. I now understand that my story is central to my education and purpose as a leader in recovery.



**Yanielys Mojica Villegas**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

College Unbound allowed me to find the value in my voice and this has helped me live authentically. The community I found here supported me to reach my goals and be here tonight. Thanks to CU I am a confident, prepared and educated woman, who strives for excellence in her life.



**Yarima Zuniga Gomez**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

At College Unbound, I learned that growth requires effort and perseverance. This journey strengthened my discipline, broadened my perspective, and reinforced my commitment to my goals. Today, I graduate with pride, preparation, and the confidence to embrace new challenges.



**Zakeea Payton**  
**WASHINGTON**

When I first began at CU, I was unsure of myself but determined to obtain my degree. I learned a lot about myself and despite multiple deaths in the family, another cancer scare and financial changes; I pushed through and still accomplished my goal of obtaining my degree with the support of my family, classmates, and lab faculty. Once I completed my courses, I felt empowered, supported, and unstoppable. I'm still moving forward with that same fire and desire to do great things with my nonprofit.

# CLASS OF 2026

## SPRING GRADUATES



**Aaron Gordon**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

College Unbound has opened up doors for me that I had delayed walking through for years.



**Akia Thomas**  
**MID-ATLANTIC**

College Unbound has helped me truly see myself as someone strong, capable, and full of purpose. It showed me that my past challenges do not define me in a negative way, but instead helped shape me into a caring, determined, and resilient person. Through my education, I have learned that my life experiences, my work in the community, and my voice all matter. CU helped me believe in myself more and see that I have the ability to grow, lead, and make a difference.



**Alicia Byrne**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

In my life I was often filled with doubt and worry. I felt I had to settle for who I was, or even the life I wanted. Attending CU is the match that lit that spark of success I now hold like a torch. This fire will support my journey onward.



**Alize Dominguez**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

Before coming to CU, I knew I was passionate about helping others, but I didn't fully see my own potential or how far I could go. Through my experiences here, I've learned that my voice, ideas, and efforts truly matter. CU has helped me grow more confident in my abilities and recognize that the challenges I've faced have shaped my strength, not limited me. Now, I see myself as someone who can create meaningful impact and continue growing both personally and professionally.



**Alyssa Branch**  
**MID-ATLANTIC**



**Amanda Marie Dee-Anderson**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

CU helped me truly "see" myself for the first time. As a teen mom, I used to see college as an overwhelming challenge, but at CU I found more than a school, I found a community that supports me and allows me to grow on my own timeline. For the first time, I felt accomplished and capable. CU has opened doors I never imagined and given me the confidence to continue my education journey.



**Amanda J Rouleau**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

CU helped me see strengths in myself that I didn't recognize when I first arrived unsure of my path. Through reflection and real-world projects, I began to understand that my lived experiences and challenges were actually preparing me for special education. CU showed me that I'm capable, resilient, and meant for this work.



**Amber H. Champlin**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

College Unbound has transformed not just how I learn but how I lead. My time here has deepened my belief that lived experience is expertise. It has strengthened my commitment to building more just and accountable systems for our communities most vulnerable members. CU has focused my voice, sharpened my determination and reminded me that community is where real change begins.



**Anthony J Thigpen**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

Before CU, I doubted myself a lot. I enrolled three times and didn't finish, but when I came back this time, I knew it was put up or shut up and so I stayed focused. I stayed on track. I interacted with my peers. I was honest with faculty so that I can receive the help that I needed and they can meet me where I'm at. Just change me in so many ways. It helped me get out of my own way what I learned to most at CU is not to be afraid, your journey is your journey.



**Antonio Maddela**  
**MID-ATLANTIC**

"Prior to CU I was very unsure of myself and how far I'd ever get without the proper education. C.U has helped me discover more about myself in such a short period of time. I've reframed my failures and used them as lessons and I've learned so much from my experiences. Not only am I graduating at 35 I am also doing this while simultaneously being a full time parent"



**Arlene Jankura**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

I've started to see that my past challenges don't define my limits, they actually show my strength and resilience. Through my time at CU I've gained more confidence in my abilities and realized that I am capable of achieving goals I once thought were out of reach.



**Aster Dube**  
**WASHINGTON**

My experience at College Unbound has helped me realize that I belong here as a college student, despite my immigrant and ESL tuition challenges. I now view my previous challenges as strengths that have contributed to my development and increase my confidence in my voice, my capabilities, and my future.



**Aubrey Elizabeth Johnson**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

Because of CU I can now see me - my growth, my accomplishments, and my future. College Unbound has rejuvenated and expanded my love for education and learning. They have helped me rebuild my confidence, see my worth, and appreciate my achievements. Besides family, never before have I been a part of a community that has been this real, caring, and supportive. CU has shown me that I have, I can, and I will continue to make difference, and I am forever grateful.



**Autumn Rain Johnson**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

College Unbound helped me see that my disability was never something that made me less, it revealed my strength, purpose, and voice! I came into this journey afraid to speak and unsure where I belonged, but CU showed me that my story has power! I'm proof that people living with disabilities can go beyond the limits placed on us, earn a college degree, and accomplish so much more! Now, I speak not just for myself, but for the next generation living with disabilities!



**Avery Sterling**  
**CHICAGO**

Cu helped me realize that my past is just that my past. It has made me believe in myself even more and know that this isn't the last step I'm here for a greater purpose. Cu has changed my perspective on my abilities by helping me understand that hard work and dedication pays off and that I am capable of succeeding in whatever way that looks like to me.



**Ayanna Wells**  
**SOUTH CAROLINA**

College Unbound has helped me see myself differently in life, not just in school. I now understand that my experiences, struggles, and growth are part of my strength and purpose. Instead of questioning my path, I see how everything I've lived through prepared me to lead, serve, and build The Well Balanced Project. CU helped me trust my voice and value my journey.



**Bethany H. MacDonald**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

I saw myself as unmotivated and never obtaining my bachelor's degree. I was introduced to College Unbound and that all changed. I worked hard, made new friendships and gained an amazing support system. It took along for me to believe that I can accomplish anything I put my mind to.



**Mr. Brian Petty**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

I put off pursuing higher education for a long time. Looking back, I made plenty of poor choices when I was younger. Eventually, I realized I needed something different for myself. Choosing College Unbound turned out to be one of the best decisions I've ever made. It feels like I finally found exactly where I'm supposed to be.



**Brian Lionberg**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

My journey with CU became a pivotal turning point. I grew up with the premise I was nobody trying to be somebody by being anybody else - thus choosing the path of least resistance. I want to thank the CU familial for encouraging me to use my lived experiences as a path of purpose, instilling confidence as an effective communicator and hope as a future returning citizen.



**Carlisia Genese Lee Minnis**  
**WASHINGTON**



**Chanelle Newkirk**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

CU has reminded me of the skills and abilities that I already obtained. It became a space to reflect, connect, and grow. I have always done things on my own and never really liked to ask for help but my journey at CU has allowed me to experience others on a similar path to a destination undisclosed. The beauty is not in getting from point a to b, yet the experience in its entirety.



**Christina L Postell**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

My perspective on myself has shifted from simply seeing myself as an entrepreneur to recognizing myself as a stronger, more confident leader and mentor. College Unbound has strengthened my ability to think critically and make strategic decisions. Challenges I once viewed as setbacks now feel like growth opportunities that built my resilience. I now trust my voice and my ability to create meaningful impact for both myself and others.



**Collita Miller**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

My perception of myself and my abilities has gone through the roof. I knew I was destined for greatness, I have a purpose. I didn't know what it was. I was so busy pouring into every one else? I forgot about me. C.U. Helped me change that, they have helped me realize and, appreciate my self worth. College unbound pours into its students. If you need help with anything' they are there for you, and if they don't have what you need, they help you get in contact with people who will help you.



**Cristina Reyes**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

My experience at College Unbound has changed my perspective by showing me that I can. It helped me realize that I am more than capable, and that with everything in me, I can do all things, even with obstacles and adversity in my way. It taught me to see my past challenges not as limits, but as proof of my strength and determination.



**Dahiana Ferreira Rodriguez Heureaux**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

Is never too late to return to your own personal learning journey and become a better version of yourself. For you, your family, your friends and your community.



**Darlene Bates-Harper**  
**MID-ATLANTIC**

Taking the class "Reframing Failure" helped me realize that changing my mindset can transform not only my circumstances but also my perspective and reactions to them. I used to feel ashamed, but once I started sharing my experiences, I discovered a heartwarming and meaningful impact, as others received my story without judgment. This shift in mindset allowed me to learn valuable lessons from my experiences and gain wisdom that I could share with others. College Unbound encouraged me to reflect.



**Desinique Walker**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

Throughout my school years I doubted it myself , I doubted if I would ever make it to College . but I am here and i discovered many within myself . Being here at College Unbound has shown me I am capable , and I can overcome my past challenges , and I am ready for whats to come next.



**Diana Fidelina Delgado Carrascot**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

When I began my journey here at CU I was completely different person. Being here at CU has helped me find myself and grow into a more confident and determined person.



**Fanisha L. Terry**  
**WASHINGTON**

College Unbound has helped me better understand my strengths and recognize how much I've grown through past challenges. The program encouraged me to reflect on my experiences, which boosted my confidence and helped me see my abilities more clearly. Because of CU, I now view myself as capable, resilient, and prepared for what comes next.



**Georgina Sarpong**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

College Unbound has helped me "see myself" as a stronger, more intentional leader. It pushed me to connect my lived experiences with my purpose. Through CU, I've learned to trust my voice, lead with clarity, and show up more confidently for myself and community.



**Glenn P Chickering Jr.**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

CU has shown me a softer, more empathetic side of myself. I have always had to make decisions on my own and am thankful where I am today. However, CU makes you take notice of yourself in a way that in the real world is seen as boastful or unflattering. CU helps celebrate what you can bring to this world and all that you inspire.



**Irving Ogando**  
**RHODE ISLAND**



**Jabraya P Tanksley**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

My journey at College Unbound is something I once didn't think was possible. But here I am, rising, leading, and turning my lived experience into purpose. This journey didn't just educate me, it transformed how I see myself. I'm leaving with confidence, clarity, and I stand as a reminder to every brown or disabled girl that you are capable, you were always capable.



**Jacob Pelliccio**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

College Unbound helped me rediscover the man my parents raised me to be. They helped me grow into a man that my family, friends, and community deserve and can be proud of. CU fostered a place for me to fall in love with my education and value all of life's lessons, always being able to find a path forward even in the darkest of times.



**Jada Lashé Butler**  
**MID-ATLANTIC**

I used to feel rooted in the past - stuck on failures that I mistakenly thought determined my worth. Picking up the broken pieces of the past to try again seemed a daunting task. Yet I took the risk to embark on this journey with CU and I couldn't predict the tremendous growth I experienced along the way. Every step of this journey helped me bloom into the strong, self-assured leader that I always knew was budding inside. The road ahead is one filled with flowers!



**Jazmin T Trueblood**  
**MID-ATLANTIC**

This journey with college unbound has helped me to recognize my strengths as a leader. This journey has made all my experiences valuable and allowed me to feel comfortable to take up space and spread my creativity. I have grown so much as a person and have gained so much confidence that no matter what happens, I will be okay.



**Mirla Santiago**  
**MID-ATLANTIC**

My experience at College Unbound has helped me gain a deeper understanding of my strengths and potential. Through self-directed projects and supportive mentorship, I've learned to view past challenges as valuable learning experiences rather than setbacks. CU's collaborative environment has boosted my confidence, showing me that my voice, ideas, and lived experiences matter. I now see myself as a capable leader, ready to turn obstacles into opportunities for growth.



**Jennifer A Veltri**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

CU created a unique approach for students like me whose time is now. For years, I put my educational goals aside because I couldn't find a curriculum that truly fit my needs or learning style. CU's program is designed to support students who are ready to return to school to better themselves and their future. As Bartleby Gaines said "Because we'll never stop learning, and we'll never stop growing, and we'll never forget the ideals what were instilled in us at our place." And our place is CU.



**Jessica Monique Perez**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

I use to question if I would ever find my purpose or place in this world. I knew I had a passion for community and advocating. These past three years at CU my journey was about learning to stop fearing the unknown and becoming exactly who I was meant to be. I will always be the exact change I wish to see in the world.



**Jessie Ann Ziobrowski**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

My journey at College Unbound changed how I see myself. The challenges that once made me question my abilities are now proof of my strength, resilience, and growth, made possible by the support, encouragement, and belief of the people who were there for me through it all.



**Jose "Josie" Rodriguez**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

Since enrolling at College Unbound, I have experienced significant growth. This educational journey has strengthened my confidence and expanded my perspective on life. College Unbound has provided me with the tools to view the world through a more thoughtful and informed lens, and for that, I am deeply grateful.



**Joe Forbes**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

This journey helped me stop doubting myself and really see the value in my voice, my experience, and everything I've had to push through to get here. It changed the way I look at my past and strengthened how I show up for my family and community. Like Deion said, "You've got to stop allowing foolishness to distract u from your goals and your purpose. Keep going baby."



**Justin Luna**  
**WASHINGTON**

I never imagined I would return to finish this journey, but today I stand here deeply grateful that I did. This accomplishment represents resilience, growth, and the power of second chances. I am incredibly thankful for my supportive family, whose encouragement carried me forward, and for the patience and collaboration of College Unbound, which made this path possible.



**Kalia Mullen**  
**MID-ATLANTIC**

College Unbound has helped me see myself more clearly and with more compassion. I've learned to look at my past as something that shaped me, not something that holds me back. The program has helped me build confidence in my abilities and trust in my voice. I feel more capable, more focused, and more open to what I can achieve. Now its much easier for me to see real potential in myself and believe I can keep growing and moving forward.



**Kathei McCoy**  
**WASHINGTON**

I used to see my challenges as detours and my story as something I had to explain. At College Unbound, I learned that my lived experience is knowledge and that my resilience is leadership. This journey deepened my confidence, strengthened my voice, and helped me see myself as both a scholar and a change-maker. I am grateful for my family, friends, and cohort who reminded me that I always had what it takes—not just to succeed, but to transform the spaces I enter.



**Kellee Brooks**  
**MID-ATLANTIC**

College Unbound helped me see my confidence in a whole new way. Before, I didn't always recognize my strengths or give myself credit for everything I've overcome. Through this experience, I've learned to trust myself more, speak up, and believe that my voice matters. It reminded me that my lived experiences, both in and out of school, have real value. I'm growing into someone who is more confident, capable, and ready to keep pushing forward.



**Kindi Drame DiGirolamo**  
**MID-ATLANTIC**

College Unbound helped me see the strength in my story and the power in my persistence. It taught me that my past challenges did not define my limits; they revealed my resilience through this journey. As a mother, this journey became bigger than me; it became about showing my children that perseverance, faith, and hard work can turn dreams into reality. Today, I see myself as a woman who turned doubt into determination and dreams into direction.



**Le'Tia Muse**  
**MID-ATLANTIC**

Before, I often felt like I had to dim my light and dumb myself down just to fit in or make others feel comfortable. However, through this journey, I have grown to understand my worth, my voice, and the value of my experiences. Instead of shrinking myself, I choose to stand confidently and shine bright. I embrace who I am without apology, and I recognize that my abilities and perspective are not only valid but powerful.



**Liam Teixeira**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

CU helped me truly “see me” by showing me that my lived experiences and challenges are not barriers, but part of the foundation of my purpose. Through this journey, I’ve gained confidence in my voice and my ability to turn personal struggles into meaningful work that supports others. CU has helped me see my past as a source of strength rather than limitation. Because of this, I move forward with a clearer sense of who I am and the impact I want to make in my community.



**Lisa Marie Tracy**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

Before College Unbound, I was just someone with potential and goals. Now, I am achieving those goals and pursuing the career of my dreams! I faced numerous obstacles throughout my time at CU which caused me to want to throw in the towel. However, with the support of my peers, family, friends and teachers, I was able to overcome everything that tried to hold me back! I am so grateful for everyone who has been in my corner and refused to give up on me! Congratulations Class of 2026! We did it!!



**Lisseth Perez**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

I once questioned whether I could balance being a professional, a family member, and a college student. College Unbound showed me that I never had to choose; I could be all of it. Through this journey, I found confidence, clarity, and the courage to take up space. I am graduating not just with a degree, but with a deeper belief in my worth and my ability to lead and uplift others.



**Marcus Rivers**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

College Unbound helped me finally see the strength and intention behind every challenge I’ve pushed through. It showed me that my lived experience is not a setback but a skill set that I can stand on with confidence. I learned to recognize my voice, my leadership, and my resilience as real power. Because of CU, I see myself with clarity, purpose, and pride I didn’t always know I deserved.



**Marcus Simpson**  
**CHICAGO**

CU has help me become a better presenter when I’m doing a presentation or or exhibition it has helped me work well with others and receive feedback and give feedback with all the breakout groups and partner assignments that we had CU has helped me develop my leadership skills it taught me different leadership styles that I will be using in the future.CU help me realize the power and importance of my lived experience.



**Melanie Santiago Rosado**  
**MID-ATLANTIC**

College Unbound has allowed me to see that my lived experiences are not setbacks, but strengths. I’ve started to recognize my resilience, adaptability, and ability to grow, even when things felt uncertain or difficult. Instead of doubting myself, I now see that the challenges I’ve faced have shaped me into someone capable and determined. CU has shifted my perspective from self-doubt to self-worth, helping me understand that my voice, my story, and my goals all matter.



**Melissa Ann Barrett**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

From Misunderstood Child to Mischievous Teen, I once thought I wasn't meant to be anyone important, stuck in a lane I didn't choose. College Unbound showed me I could go anywhere and fully own my potential. I learned to turn failure into strength, embrace my voice, and claim my worth. Now as a Missionized Adult, I use my growth and knowledge to lead others, showing them they don't have to stay in any lane either.



**Mirla Santiago**  
**WASHINGTON**

My experience at College Unbound has helped me gain a deeper understanding of my strengths and potential. Through self-directed projects and supportive mentorship, I've learned to view past challenges as valuable learning experiences rather than setbacks. CU's collaborative environment has boosted my confidence, showing me that my voice, ideas, and lived experiences matter. I now see myself as a capable leader, ready to turn obstacles into opportunities for growth.



**Naadira M. Phillips**  
**MID-ATLANTIC**

I used to wonder if going back to school was possible while balancing everything in my life. At College Unbound, I learned that my experiences, challenges, and resilience were part of my strength. This journey helped me find my voice, build confidence, and believe in the change I can create in my community. I'm grateful to my family, friends, and cohort for supporting me along the way.



**Naketia Smalls**  
**SOUTH CAROLINA**

CU has made me discover more about myself and my abilities in more ways than one. Throughout this journey of self-discovery, being a student at CU has unlocked a side of me I didn't know existed. Years ago, I felt silly calling myself a leader, because I never thought I could be one. However, I've learned that through my life experiences, I was being developed to the very thing that I didn't think was possible -- a leader. Thank you CU.



**Nathalie Rivera**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

College Unbound helped me finally see my strengths. I learned to recognize that my resilience, my voice, and the way I show up for others are real skills, not just survival. CU pushed me to trust my abilities and honor the experiences that shaped me. Now I see myself as capable, grounded, and ready for what's next.



**Nicholas Condon**  
**RHODE ISLAND**



**Nury Elena Calderon**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

College Unbound has helped me see that my struggles as an immigrant and English learner are strengths, not weaknesses. I now recognize my resilience, perseverance, and life experience as valuable assets. CU changed how I see myself—I am not just a student, but a confident leader and role model.



**Pamela Ingram**  
**MID-ATLANTIC**

I wasn't sure if I would be able to succeed at today's universities as an older adult student. The support that CU provided has helped me to envision my goals and passion will contribute collectively throughout my community. This validation has raised my confidence to the next level of my educational journey.



**Quentoria Jones**  
**SOUTH CAROLINA**

My time at CU transformed not only my education, but reframed my mindset and outlook on life. It helped me see myself as capable, intelligent, and worthy, and recognize that my challenges are strengths that shape my leadership and purpose. Through reflection and growth, I shifted from simply surviving circumstances to feeling equipped to create change. CU moved my mindset from doubt to confidence and from limitation to possibility.



**Rachele Viaud**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

Yes my perspective of myself was before I was very shy and I closed myself in and now I am brave and open-minded and I can share. What's in my mind very open and feel good about myself.



**Rafael Bonilla**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

Before College Unbound, I doubted my potential and focused on past challenges. Through this journey, I've learned to see my resilience and the value I bring to others. CU helped me recognize that I am capable, confident, and deserving of success. I now move forward with purpose and belief in myself.



**Ramel Moore**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

CU is one of the toughest things I have ever accomplished in my life. I started CU at the age of 43, not really knowing what I was getting myself into. It was a challenge presented to me by the founder of the school, and I quickly learned that I had to learn how to learn all over again. I would not have made it through without God, my family, and my CU community.



**Rebecca Murphy Pinto**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

I used to doubt myself and carry my challenges quietly. College Unbound helped me see those experiences as strengths. I've grown as a student, mother, and leader, and gained a deeper understanding of what my grandfather worked to build. Through this journey, I feel closer to him, seeing life through his lens. I carry the lessons of all my angels, who continue to guide me in everything I do. Now I move forward with confidence, purpose, and the tenacity to achieve what I set my mind to.



**Renaldo Turner**  
**CHICAGO**

Putting perspective to the understanding of the true connections between lived experiences and expertise has been profound for me.



**Ronald Johnson**  
**CHICAGO**

CU has helped me in becoming more focused and career driven. CU has also helped me become more organized while in my role as an Outreach Specialist.



**Ryan Duxbury**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

I've never fit the traditional educational norms society talks about. I had to grow up fast, and most of my learning came from lived experience and real responsibility. For a long time, I saw that as survival, not intelligence. College Unbound helped me realize those experiences built leadership, resilience, and critical thinking and showed me that I am capable and worthy of a formal education.



**Sandra Lyn Warner**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

I spent many years caring for others while quietly setting my own dreams aside and doubting my abilities. College Unbound helped me rediscover my strength and showed me that my compassion and past challenges are sources of power, not limitations. This degree represents healing, hope, and the courage to believe in myself and my future.



**Selene Allenhodges**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

Confined within my own mind, I once felt held back despite a life full of unimaginable possibilities. Everything changed when I found College Unbound a place that helped me break the chains I had placed on myself and step fully into my strength. Through this journey, I've grown into a confident, educated woman who believes deeply in her purpose. No matter what negativity the world may bring, I will continue to believe in myself, push forward, and rise above.



**Soniya Bhogal Baez**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

This journey transformed me. As a mother and advocate, I learned that my experiences are powerful, not limiting. I leave CU stronger, more confident, and deeply committed to my family and community.



**Stanley John Howard**  
**CHICAGO**

I didn't believe I had the tech skills to complete an online course and wanted to drop out of CU while just getting started, but faculty, my cohort and peers were not having it. This gave me the confidence and motivation that fueled my desire to do something amazing in my life - to receive a Bachelor's Degree.



**Sylviannie Quezada**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

Before College Unbound, I carried stories that were never mine, quietly shaped by voices louder than my own. Here, I learned to see myself—fully, fiercely, and without permission. I found my voice, my stance, my truth. And in that reflection, I became unbound.



**Tammy Michelle Palmer**  
**CHICAGO**

Being at College Unbound has helped me truly see myself as capable, resilient, and worthy of success. Through this journey, I've learned to recognize my strengths, value my life experiences, and to trust my voice in both academic and personal settings. Challenges that once felt overwhelming now feel like proof of how far I've come and how much I can handle. CU reminded me that my past does not limit me; it empowers me, and that I belong in spaces where growth, leadership, and opportunity exist.



**Tatiana I. Batista**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

I came to the U.S. already holding a bachelor's degree, unsure of how to move forward in a new country and educational system. Instead of simply validating my degree, I found CU. With the guidance and support of my faculty, I learned how to navigate college life again while honoring my experiences and growth. Each instructor offered more than an academic path, it provided guidance and understanding. This experience expanded my perspective, and embraced my journey as a lifelong learner.



**Taylor A. Perkins**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

My experience at CU has helped me see that my life experiences and past challenges are not barriers, but strengths that shaped the way I learn and lead. It has increased my confidence in my abilities by showing me that I am capable of contributing meaningful ideas, and creating change in my community.



**Telissa Doggett**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

Since starting at College Unbound, the way I see myself has truly transformed. After dropping out of high school, earning my diploma, and stepping away from college during COVID, CU showed me it is never too late to reclaim your path. I now see my past challenges as the experiences that built my resilience, empathy, and strength as an educator. Today, I stand more confident in my voice and fully own the leader I am becoming..



**Thalia Marie Serrano-Rodriguez**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

Along this journey, I have always said that this degree is for my two boys, but I also did this for myself, and the pride I feel for all I have accomplished is an understatement. I am a first-generation immigrant and will be the first in my family to graduate with a college degree. College Unbound has not only given me the tools and skills I needed to earn my degree but also opened opportunities for me to successful.



**Thekla Gabrielle Samantha Gibson**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

CU created a context for a learner like me flourish. My brilliant, open-hearted colleagues, supportive staff, & phenomenal educators not only enhanced my passion work, they've helped me to excel, evolve, and become a better version of myself. I get to effectively integrate my multidisciplinary background with empowering learning opportunities that shift the paradigm for me and the people I serve.



**Tiffany Michelle Lopez Gonzalez**  
**MID-ATLANTIC**

I used to struggle with anxiety and doubted if I would ever finish college. During my time at College Unbound, I faced a difficult pregnancy with my youngest child while continuing my education. Despite the challenges, I kept pushing forward. Today, I am proud to have finished my degree and grateful for the support of my family and the CU community.



**True Parker**  
**CHICAGO**

My time at CU has been a journey that challenged me to grow, persevere, and lead with purpose. I balanced the demands of family, career, and education emerging stronger, more confident, and more committed to the work I do. Through this experience, I've built meaningful relationships and gained a deeper understanding of the impact I can have on others. I leave CU not only with a degree, but with a renewed sense of purpose, compassion and intention.



**Ty'Relle J Stephens**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

College Unbound helped me see myself differently. It showed me that my story, including the hard moments, has value and purpose, and that God was working through it the whole time. I no longer question if I'm ready, I understand that I've been being prepared. I've grown more confident in my voice, my leadership, and my ability to make an impact. College Unbound didn't just give me an education, it helped me step into what God has ordained for me to be.



**Yesenia Liz Valle**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

CU has helped me to grow and flourish in more ways than one. Since enrolling into CU my confidence and courage has increases immensely . I have had the courage to move to a new state and take calculated risk in my career . Learning all the strengths I have developed in my character through adversity and life experience is also a life long valuable mindset shift I have gained during my time at CU.

**CLASS OF 2026**  
**SUMMER GRADUATES**

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**Aaliyah Robinson**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

College Unbound helped me see myself as capable and resilient. It shifted how I view my past challenges, from failures to experiences that shaped my strength and growth. Through CU, I learned that my lived experiences as a parent, professional, and community member are valuable and meaningful. It helped me recognize that I am not just surviving, but growing into a leader.



**Chapearl Thompson**  
**CHICAGO**

I would like to say this journey was personal . Many time I felt like giving up but I couldn't do it. So here I am giving me my flowers and proud to say I made it I want to thank my family my friends and my CU cohort for everything.



**Cheyenne Doran**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

My experience at College Unbound has changed how I see myself by helping me realize that I am capable, resilient, and able to succeed despite past challenges. I no longer view my struggles as barriers, but as experiences that have strengthened my determination and shaped who I am today. This journey has built my confidence and shifted my mindset from self-doubt to believing in my abilities and future.



**Dayna Dulin**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

My nontraditional journey led me exactly where I was meant to be. After challenges with traditional colleges, finding CU changed everything for me. This experience has been truly meaningful, and I'm so thankful for my cohort family, friends, and family who supported me every step of the way.



**Deannett Cruz**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

My College Unbound education has helped me see myself as more capable and resilient than I once believed. Through reflecting on my experiences and challenges, I've realized that my past does not limit my potential but instead strengthens my perspective and determination.



**Ellen Pinnock**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

Everything I have ever done in my life has been to benefit someone else. CU helped me see that I matter. My dreams matter. My goals matter. CU made space for me to be supported and considered so I could finally reach something I've wanted so badly.



**Janira Amadeo**  
**MID-ATLANTIC**

My perspective on myself has changed greatly through my CU education. I once doubted my abilities and felt defined by past challenges, but now I see those experiences as strengths. This journey has helped me build confidence, resilience, and a stronger belief in myself. I now understand that growth takes time and that setbacks do not define me. Balancing school, work, and family has shown me how capable I truly am. Today, I see myself as determined, capable, and deserving of success.



**Julissa Filpo**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

College Unbound helped me see my own potential. As a mother, teacher, and student, balancing life was not always easy, but this journey showed me how strong and capable I really am. I am proud of how far I have come and grateful for the support from my family, my cohort, and the CU community.



**Julnelle Fortes**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

There were times when it felt hard to make space for myself, but this experience showed me that I was capable of more than I had given myself credit for. College Unbound helped me open up, recognize my potential, and highlight accomplishments I used to overlook. It changed how I see my past challenges—not as setbacks, but as proof of my strength, growth, and ability to keep pushing forward.



**Justin Erickson**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

I feel more confident and comfortable in my skin.



**Kaholanis Amadis**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

C.U. has helped transformed me from someone who simply wanted to teach into a more reflective, compassionate educator who truly sees every child as remarkably and wondrously made. With God's guidance, I am stepping forward ready to create classrooms full of joy, belonging, and hope for every child I serve. To God be the glory!



**Michelle M Lee**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

I didn't fully see myself as capable in the way I do now. I carried my experiences as survival stories, not as evidence of strength or leadership. College Unbound helped me understand that my lived experiences are not separate from my education, they are my education. The challenges I once carried quietly are now the foundation of my voice and purpose. Today, I stand confident, knowing my story holds power and has prepared me not just to succeed, but to lead with intention, empathy, and impact.



**Nikia Lima**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

Being at College Unbound changed how I see myself and my journey. I used to doubt my abilities and feel like my challenges held me back, but now I see them as strengths that shaped who I am. My experience in caregiving and healthcare showed me that I've been learning and growing all along. I feel more confident in my voice and my goals, and I truly believe I can create the future I want.



**Renee K. Folsom**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

Before College Unbound, I often doubted myself and felt unsure of what I was capable of achieving. Throughout this journey, I've grown into someone who trusts her voice, embraces challenges, and believes in her purpose. I've built meaningful relationships and gained the confidence to keep pushing forward. I am thankful for my family, my community, and College Unbound for helping me see my worth and step fully into who I am becoming.



**Valerie Briggs**  
**RHODE ISLAND**

Since I have turned 40, I knew that I needed and wanted something more for myself, I just didn't know what that was. Being a part of College Unbound opened my eyes and helped me to see that I just needed to have confidence in myself and know that I can do anything that I put my mind and heart into. I now have the confidence to speak up and fight for what I need and that is a feeling that I will not let go off. Here I come world, so be ready, because I am.



**Valerine Vazquez  
Biascochea**

**RHODE ISLAND**

Before College Unbound, I doubted my worth and voice. CU helped me see the value in my experiences and perspective, showing me that my knowledge and resilience matter. I enjoyed my education at CU. I am truly grateful to College Unbound for their support, and to my cohort, family, and friends for helping me reach this milestone.



**Veronica Jimenez**

**MID-ATLANTIC**

I once felt very uncertain about my future. Since beginning my journey at College Unbound, I have grown more confident and excited about what lies ahead, especially my goal of becoming a great teacher for my students. College Unbound helped me discover that many things I once believed were meaningless or insignificant about myself actually have value and purpose. This experience has helped me see my strengths and believe in my potential.

# STAFF

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## **Nikki Andrews**

Registrar

## **David Bromley**

National Growth & Implementation, Dir. of PA

## **Wanda Brown**

Community Care Coordinator of Rhode Island

## **Adam Bush**

President

## **Karen Casper**

Associate Provost for Administration & Academic Support

## **Elizabeth Colon**

Director of Learning in Public

## **Raheem Conerson-Jackson**

Community Care Coordinator of DV

## **Allen Cowett**

Director of Financial Aid

## **Jessica Crawley**

Senior Community Ambassador

## **Abby Crew**

Assistant Provost & Director of Curriculum Development

## **Megan Demeroutis**

Site Director of Washington

## **Chris Dickson**

Assistant Dean of Student Success

## **Amanda Esons**

Institutional Storyteller

## **Nathaly Fernandez**

Senior Community Ambassador, Rhode Island

## **Jessica Gomez**

Student Accounts Specialist

## **Liz Griffin**

Community Care Coordinator of WA

## **Mark Hartonchik**

Interim Chief Financial Officer

## **Jordana Hoyt**

Admissions & Community Ambassador

## **Debra Jonfelix**

Admissions & Community Ambassador

## **Melina Kuchinov**

National Director of Lab Faculty

## **Hanna Lichtenstein**

Academic Systems & Administrative Coordinator  
For Lifelong Learning

## **Liza McLatcher**

Communications & Events Coordinator

## **Swetha Narasimhan**

TA2BA Pathway Specialist

## **Thomas Norton**

Senior Financial Aid Counselor

## **Page Pena**

Ambassador to Justice-Impacted Students Technology

## **Elaine Plourde**

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& Educational Technology

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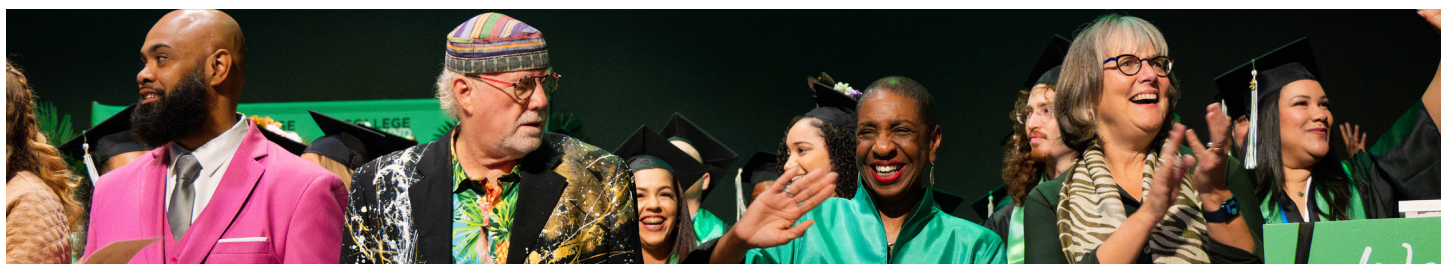
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## Artist Spotlight

A heartfelt thank you for the time and talent of College Unbound student and artist, Safiro Velez. Safiro's original design "A Journey Not a Finish Line" is featured on our Class of 2026 t-shirts and throughout our graduation materials. As a Work Study student for College Unbound, Safiro has supported countless digital design and creative projects, and we're so grateful.



# CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF 2026



Now that you've crossed the stage, you're officially part of a powerful network of College Unbound Alumni across the globe.



**STAY CONNECTED.  
GET INVOLVED.  
MAKE AN IMPACT.**

**Use the QR code to join our Alumni Facebook Group to:**

- Stay updated on alumni events & reunions
- Network with fellow grads
- Give back through mentorship & volunteering
- Celebrate milestones & memories

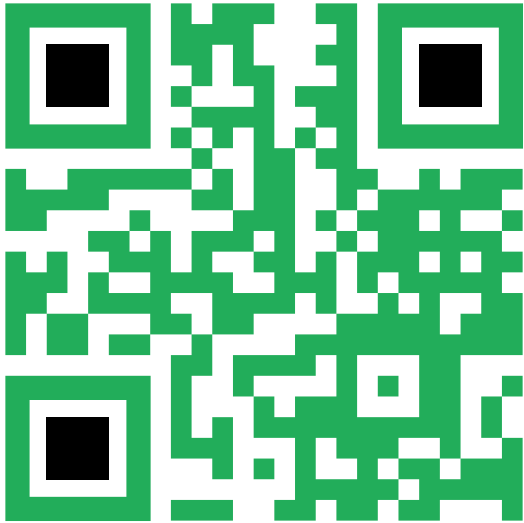
*For more info, contact Mike Reaves, Chief of Staff*  
[michael.reaves@collegeunbound.edu](mailto:michael.reaves@collegeunbound.edu)

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This work is only possible through collaboration—with our students, alumni, faculty, partners, and supporters who believe that education should change lives, not limit them. Together, we're shaping a future where learning never stops, opportunity never closes, and every person has the tools to lead change. Your gift to College Unbound is a gift towards our collective future.

Scan the QR code to donate and help us continue redefining who college is for.



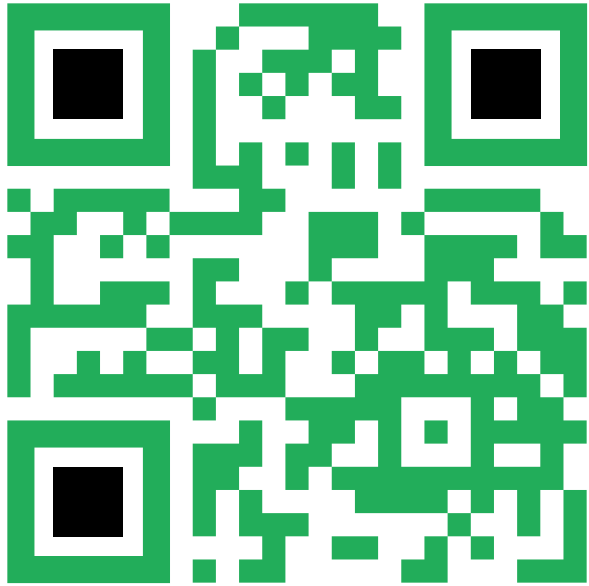
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**BEGIN WHERE YOU ARE.  
BUILD WHAT'S NEXT.**

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