

[Year Up Chicago Graduation Closed Captioning Script](#)

[Welcome!](#)

Thank you for joining us in celebrating the graduating Class of Summer 2022 from Year Up Chicago! For details on how to attend the event, please see the viewing instructions below.

This document serves as a transcript and translation of our graduation ceremony. As you watch the premiere of our ceremonial video, please refer to this document to follow along.

A few notes about this document:

- Timestamps included throughout the document are estimates. For accuracy, viewers can refer to speaker names included in both this document, and on screen, throughout the ceremony.
- Similarly, a portion the ceremony program is dedicated to announcing award winners. To keep the element of surprise, names of graduate award recipients have been removed from this document. Award winners will be announced on screen.

Thank you again for joining us! We hope you enjoy the program.

[How to Attend:](#)

The Year Up Chicago Graduation Ceremony will be a virtual event streamed through Facebook Premiere on the Arizona Facebook page below.

[Year Up Chicago Facebook](#)

The event will start promptly at 6:00 PM CT. We encourage you to open the Chicago Facebook page 5-10 minutes early. The video will appear on our main Facebook page and you will not need a direct access link.

If you follow the Chicago Facebook page, you will receive a notification that we are premiering the event soon.

You are not required to have a Facebook account to watch the premiere, though you do need to be signed into an account to set a reminder and post comments or reactions.



6:00 PM | GRADUATE WELCOME - DEYANIRA GARCIA

Hola mi gente and welcome! We did it y'all and I am unbelievably proud of each and every one of you. This has quite literally been one of the weirdest, craziest years of my life.

See before I even knew what Year Up was, I was riding the struggle bus... that is... life as a college graduate working at the same job I started 3 years ago because according to several companies, I didn't have enough experience for an entry-level position. I spent years trying and continuously being rejected or left unanswered and you know what I did? I blamed myself, believing I wasn't good enough. I, like many of you, always knew I was meant to do great things in this world. I had something important to say. I just needed a chance.

Fast forward to 2020. Same job, different location. Some of you know the full story, but for those who don't, let's just say it most definitely wasn't the right fit for me. I continued looking for jobs within my field of study, and nothing. I genuinely felt stuck, extremely unhappy with myself and then the pandemic hit which made it even worse. I was so physically, mentally, and emotionally drained that I would come home from work and immediately go to my bed. That's when it hit me, I needed to do something, anything that would help me stay away from my room.

I remembered how interested I was in video game design when I was younger that I decided, with a little the help from my friends, that I would learn a new skill and to my surprise, I really enjoyed it. I started looking up jobs to find qualifications and requirements needed. I was determined to break into the tech industry, and I guess that FBI agent in my phone heard because I started seeing ads on social media which led to a Tik Tok video about the Year Up program. I remember thinking "this cannot be real" ... there's most certainly a catch." So, I reached out to Year Up on social media to get more information and that's when I was informed the age requirement to apply was extended to 26 years old. I was 26 and took this as a sign from life.

On April 20, 2021, I was accepted into the program and the start of my journey began. I did one of the hardest things anyone can do and essentially start over. I quit my full-time position which meant no job and no health insurance but again, this was my time. Being that I was 26, I was aware that I may be one, if not the oldest student and I also hadn't been in school for 4 years. I had terrible imposter syndrome asking myself how I would be able to showcase my skill set and make friends especially in a virtual setting.

First few weeks in and I realized I could utilize my age and experience to my advantage to help others reach their own goals especially my girls in the IT track. I know I've said this before, but I want to reiterate how much every single person in this room has helped me grow into the person and professional I am today. What



people see on the outside is someone who is confident, strong, independent and knows what's going on at all times. However, on the inside, I was suffering from depression and anxiety. I even had a few panic attacks throughout the year.

This speech isn't about how much I suffered or the sacrifices I made to be here but a thank you letter to every individual in this room because quite honestly, you saved my life. You made me laugh when it didn't feel possible. You helped me believe in myself. You reminded me to pat myself on the back for my accomplishments. You provided me with the resources to support my growth and development here and just like a CVS receipt, the list goes on and on.

As I mentioned before, I knew from a young age I was meant to do great things and I realized through this program that all I really needed was a true support system. I am no longer just my name but now a legacy. My name is Deyanira Garcia, a proud Latina working in tech thanks to the Year Up program. I am forever indebted to this program and my cohort.

Before I end, I want to bring something up. I've noticed a trend throughout the year of my colleagues who have continuously downplayed their accomplishments because they didn't want to seem like they were bragging, didn't want to come off as arrogant or they wanted to seem humble. While I do understand this mindset, I'm here to remind you all to celebrate yourselves, be proud of everything you've accomplished –big and small and what it took to get to where you are now. When we don't recognize our achievements, we minimize our efforts and the quality of work done. We went through it all, internet issues, group projects, deliverables, deadlines, final exams, classes and let's not forget that some of us had a job or jobs and struggled with our own personal issues all virtual and all during a pandemic.

I am truly honored to have met such an incredible group of young individuals. Please never forget how important your accomplishments are to your story. Thank you and congratulations to my fellow new Year Up Alumni, class of 2022!

6:06 PM | HOST WELCOME - DALILA TORRES & ASHLEY MORALES

Dalila: Good evening everybody! I am Dalila Torres.

Ashley: And I'm Ashley Morales and we'll be serving as your lovely hosts tonight!

Dalila: Ashley can you believe this moment is finally here! First, I want to thank everyone who has come and celebrated our graduation along with your continuous support for myself and my colleagues throughout the program. Secondly, I want to congratulate all my colleagues who made it through this journey and are standing with me today

Ashley: Thank you Dalila, it is truly incredible! One of the first things we were told in Year Up is that we would be exposed to a high demand, high support system. Throughout our accelerated courses in the learning and development phase, we soaked up hard and soft skills in preparation for internship. Which made us face a new set of challenges. These new corporate environments not only made us put our skills to the test but exposed us to a new workforce where we had to quickly adapt.

Dalila: That's right Ashley, but as I stand here today, I can say that I have grown as a person, gained professional career-oriented skills, learned to work as one as a community, and seen the possibilities that can be obtained if given the opportunity. Through all the memories that we have shared through this experience, the connections that we have made with each other, and the evolving mindsets we all have for our careers. The biggest takeaways I have through all of this are to stay gritty and to keep growing.

Ashley: Exactly Dalila, But of course, we were not expected to go through this alone. We had help from our staff such as our coaches, instructors, and student service team. We even had our peers cheer us on and offer support and reminders us of our assignments. Which brings me to my first advice. Whatever you do, don't do it alone. The high demand, high support model should be one of the many things we take with us from Year Up as we continue our journey.

Dalila: Thank you Ashley that is a great piece of advice. Let us begin the ceremony, we have an exciting program ahead but before we get started, I want to mention one quick thing. In typical Year Up fashion, this event involves an interactive. Oh yeah, we couldn't graduate without doing one last interactive.

Ashley: Exactly, we want to hear from you! Throughout the event, make sure to answer the prompts that appear on the screen!

Dalila: Without further ado, please welcome our Site Director, Aprill Hawkins!

6:09 PM | SITE DIRECTORS WELCOME - APRILL HAWKINS

Good evening Year Up graduates, current students, alumni, our families, friends-- We are so glad to see you all here this evening. I am Aprill Hawkins, the Site Director for our Harold Washington Campus and we're so excited to celebrate the accomplishments of these young adults.

This past year has continued to be one of challenge for many but every young person here has stepped up to the challenge. They have been a source of knowledge, of inspiration, of laughter for Year Up staff and while we are sad to see you all go, we are so, so in awe of you all and excited to see the next steps in your professional journey. We encourage you all to keep in contact with us. Let us know how you all are doing. We love hearing from you all and just seeing how you all continue to grow as people and as professionals. So thank you for making this last



year for us a great one in spite of all the challenges we were enduring. Congratulations!

6:10 PM | EXTERNAL KEYNOTE ADDRESS - AUGUSTUS OAKES

Hello my name is Gus Oakes and I'm the Chief Information Officer at ATI Physical Therapy here in Chicago. Let me first start by congratulating you on an amazing achievement. So congratulations you've made it! You've put a lot of work in, you've dedicated your time, and you've achieved an amazing goal. Very proud of you today on your graduation, so congratulations again. I thought what I'd do is share some thoughts that I'd prepared for a recent interview that I had about some things that I had learned in my career and I wanted to share those with you today.

So the first thing I wanted to share, I have three points, and the first one is about people. My perspective is that people matter even more than you may think. As I reflect on your achievement and what you've done, clearly you know that there were people that helped you get where you are today. And in return you will help many people get where they need to go. So I wanted to emphasize how important people are. All of you are clearly important and you're going to help people like me in the efforts that I have. But more importantly I'm excited about helping people like you. So it's something I want to impart to you is to always think about how important people are, whether your helping them or whether receiving there help. And they matter even more than you may think, so we say it all the time but I want you to really think about that. The second lesson I've learned in my career is staying humble really does matter. So what does that mean? Staying humble means there's no ego, you're always open minded and your willing to learn. Having an open mind really enables you to get to the best answers with the best points view from all types of people. When you have an ego it really does get in the way, so the more you can remain humble and eager to learn the better. And the last piece is about integrity so integrity to me is about doing the right thing. So generally when you do the right things for the right reasons good things tend to happen. And the way I think about that is if you do what's right for your people, if you do what's right for your company, if you do what's right for your family good things will happen.

And when I sum up all these lessons, the last comment that I wrote in my preparation is when you do all these things with the right team and the right people you can win championships. Each of you are about to step into a scenario where you're going to become part of a broader team. If you can be a great team member and help the team succeed you will win championships. So let me end by saying congratulations again, I'm so proud of what you've done and quite frankly so impressed. I'm very excited about partnering with Year Up and having many of you hopefully come through the halls of ATI and help us do what we do every day. Again congratulations on a job well done have a great rest of your day and enjoy this moment.

6:13 PM | GRADUATE KEYNOTE ADDRESS - PAUL DEANDA

Ashley: Next up, one of our peers, Paul DeAnda is going to share his story, and it is my pleasure to introduce him at this time. Please welcome Paul to the stage.

Paul: Good evening my fellow colleagues and staff, thank you for joining us tonight. Tonight is the night that we as a community become a part of the esteemed group known as the Year Up alumni. The road to this success as students was, by all means, not an easy one but as a community, a family, we pushed for this outcome we can all be proud of. As much as we are all looking forward to our next steps beyond tonight, it is equally important to take the time to reflect on who we all were one year ago and the amount of growth we've all experienced as young professionals.

Our individual and diverse backgrounds are what makes every one of us unique. Before Year Up, I was coming close to finishing my six-year time drilling for the United States Marine Corps. Reserves while working full-time jobs along the way. The jobs I had until then were dead-end jobs where I felt more of a body rather than an asset to the company I was under and I felt rather lost on what my next steps should be. I was referred to giving Year Up a try through some of my long-time friends who were alumni. As many of us initially heard about Year Up, we all thought it was too good to be true but our individual why's were our motivators to apply for this journey.

For a lot of us, that first week of orientation was daunting, jumping on a zoom call with strangers at the time was something scary for a lot of us. The thought of participating in an icebreaker activity would make me anxious at the time, but I can say now I stand more open and proud than where I used to be one year ago. Something that I learned during my time in the Marine Corps is that community and camaraderie are things to strive for wherever you go. The community built within the LCs is exemplary, I can say that I never imagined that some of the strongest connections and the most powerful sense of community would come from a virtual environment during a global pandemic.

The skills we learned through our instructors in L&D would be instrumental when it came time for our internships. We utilized what we learned in our L&D phases as we continued to learn in our own, respective roles through the six months of experience we had in our corporate partner companies. Though we were separated as an LC at that time, the joy of seeing everyone reconvened on those seminar days was something I looked forward to because it brought us all back together. Internship brought along its fair share of challenges too, but we delivered. I've learned a lot of lessons through my experiences as a project coordinator intern, some learned the hard way, some through experience, and some in the form of wisdom passed down through the many mentors I had during this time and I can feel confident in the skills I have gained. I am forever grateful, it truly was an invaluable experience, one that I will never forget. On the Year Up side, we had our



program managers, coaches, ISMs, the rest of the staff, and each other as well to lean on for support with our various challenges, to the staff, thank you for all your hard work for doing what you do with a passion and your undying commitment to closing the opportunity divide for future LCs to come.

Though we look back on our experiences as students of Year Up now as alumni. Those six core values that were taught in L&D and guided through internship will continue to be the foundation of our growth and success. Those core values were to:

- Respect and value others
- Engage and embrace diversity
- Build trust and be honest
- Strive to learn
- Be accountable
- Work hard and have fun

These six core values will continue to guide us further as we continue to deliver and empower as students of life on whatever path we choose to take. Thank you, Year Up, and everyone for being part of this year-long journey. The experiences we had together will keep us connected forever.

Dalila: Thank you Paul. I am proud to stand along with you on this journey as well. And now, let's transition to the highlight of the evening—the presentation of certificates! It is my great pleasure to introduce Jasmin Atkins, a.k.a. our "fairy grandmother" to the stage.

6:18 PM | PRESENTATION OF CERTIFICATES

Jasmin: And now... it's the moment you've all been waiting for... or at least the moment I've been waiting for! So graduates, please open the boxes that were sent to you before the ceremony. Among other things, you'll find inside your official Year Up graduation certificate, which is a testament to the past year of hard work, talent, and determination that has brought you all through this journey, to the next stage of your professional careers.

And now, staff from our Corporate Engagement and Internship Services teams will recognize each of our graduates.

Andrea Vaughn Hello I am Andrea Vaughn director of corporate engagement for the Chicago market and I'm pleased to announce AT&T Graduates and they are.....

Please tune into your screen to see the graduates appear on screen.



CIBC here are your graduates...

Please tune into your screen to see the graduates appear on screen.

Next we have DocuSign your graduate is....

Please tune into your screen to see the graduates appear on screen.

Up next is Glassdoor....

Please tune into your screen to see the graduates appear on screen.

Uber Technologies Inc your graduate is...

Please tune into your screen to see the graduates appear on screen.

Year Up National Team your graduates are.....

Please tune into your screen to see the graduates appear on screen.

Apogem Capital your graduate is

Please tune into your screen to see the graduates appear on screen.

Superior Malik-Clark: First I want to thank God for blessing me with this opportunity and loving me unconditionally. Second I want to thank my mom, my family, and friends for pushing me to better and exceptional. Lastly I want to thank my coaches Luis and Chelsea, my coaching group the busy bees, all instructors at Year up, and my internship managers you guys are the reason I'm here and I'm so thankful.

Nilda Duenas: My name is Nilda Duenas, Associate Director of Internship Services I want to thank United Airlines for the partnership and congratulate our graduates tonight...

Please tune into your screen to see the graduates appear on screen.

Jessica Banos-Monsivais: I'm thankful for all my IT girls super proud of y'all, my coaches: Adriana, Sheila and the best program manager Kivin. Y'all are heaven sent thank you for everything you do and putting your full all into this program because trust me it shows. Last but not least my besties, Deya, Dylan, and Alexis thanks for being there for me we're going to make it far.

Matthew Klien: Good Evening Everybody and congratulations to our graduates what a special night. Hi I'm Matthew Klien and I'd like to acknowledge here some very very special graduates. First off from E*TRADE from Morgan Stanley... Big thank you to Jeremy, Lidia, DJ, Q, Jim the whole team, such a wonderful, wonderful team from my heart thank you for this journey. First up we have.....



Please tune into your screen to see the graduates appear on screen.

And from Zynga we have....

Please tune into your screen to see the graduates appear on screen.

From Accenture we have the wonderful....

Please tune into your screen to see the graduates appear on screen.

And from Hyatt Hotels we have.....

Please tune into your screen to see the graduates appear on screen.

Thank you everybody have a wonderful night

Yvette Vargas: Hello Everyone I'm Yvette Vargas one of the Internship Services Managers for Year Up Chicago. I want to take today introduce the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago's Interns starting with.....

Please tune into your screen to see the graduates appear on screen.

We also want to thank Exelon for hosting the following interns....

Please tune into your screen to see the graduates appear on screen.

Thank you Exelon for being a part of their development

Jennifer Mitchell: Congratulations graduating interns so excited that you have made it this way and can't wait to see where you go on your professional journey. I'm Jennifer Mitchell, I'm the director of corporate engagement first of all I'll be reading the graduating interns from our fabulous partner Linked In so to start off we have.....

Please tune into your screen to see the graduates appear on screen.

Next Up we have another fantastic partner Salesforce who has seven graduating interns this cycle. And we'll start off with.....

Please tune into your screen to see the graduates appear on screen.

Jaziel Rojas: "Be thankful for what you have, you'll end up have more. If you concentrate on what you don't have you'll never ever have enough." -By Oprah Winfrey. I want to thank my friends, family, and instructors for supporting me throughout this journey especially my wife Amy. I love you all.

Kristina Cerney: Hi my name is Kristina Cerney and I'm the Director of Corporate engagement for Year Up. I just want to congratulate each one of our Year Up graduates. You have earned this graduation, you've worked so hard on your



internship, and during learning and development. It truly has been a spectacular year and congratulations. Your future is so so bright. And I want to announce the next round of graduates that are coming from us from Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine. And the graduates are..... Congratulations.
Please tune into your screen to see the graduates appear on screen.

These next interns served at our corporate partner Jones Lang Lasalle also known as JLL. JLL is a national partner of Year Up's and they have several seats here in Chicago and I'm so proud to announce these graduates. Congratulations.....
Congratulations
Please tune into your screen to see the graduates appear on screen.

These next round of graduates are from Motorola Solutions, congratulations too.....
Please tune into your screen to see the graduates appear on screen.

And lastly, a big thank you to John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Organization that hosted two of our interns giving them really great learning experiences. Congratulations too.....
Please tune into your screen to see the graduates appear on screen.

Alex Robinson: Hi Everyone my name is Alexandria Robinson and I'm the Internship Services Manager here at downtown Chicago. I will be presenting the graduates from AbbVie and GE cohorts. Starting with AbbVie we have.....
Please tune into your screen to see the graduates appear on screen.

Now introducing GE graduates we have...
Please tune into your screen to see the graduates appear on screen.

We want to thank both AbbVie and GE for hosting our cycle of interns and now graduates. Graduating class of 2022 I'm so proud of you, welcome to the Alum side, can't wait to meet you.

Kelise Coldman: I also would like to thank my mom because she has supported me from the beginning since I told her about the Year Up program, she's been the main and only one supporting me. I also would like to congratulate my course and my class, we did it were finally done and I'm so proud of all of you guys and yes thank you.

Tonya Lloyd: Hello all I'm Tonya Lloyd, Account Director, and I sit on the corporate engagement team here in Chicago. I have the absolute fortune to support two of our largest partners here in Chicago. Namely JP Morgan Chase and Bank of America. Today I'm here to recognize, acknowledge, and congratulate our graduates. In the words of Michelle Obama- "Don't be afraid, be focused, be determined, be hopeful, be empowered." To the graduates I'm wishing you

continued success as you embark on your professional careers. To the Internship Managers that tirelessly coached, developed, and inspired these young adults to be great, we thank you. Let me start by acknowledging our Year Up Chicago intern.....
Please tune into your screen to see the graduates appear on screen.

Now I have the opportunity to introduce our Bank of America graduates....
Please tune into your screen to see the graduates appear on screen.

Karen Romero: I want to give a huge thank you to program managers, coaches, group A and group B for being consistent and persistent and staying throughout the whole program and internship phase. You all make Year Up and myself very proud, thank you for making everything possible when it comes to making friendships networking and staying gritty.

Jennifer Cullop: Hi Everybody my name is Jennifer Cullop I am Internship Services Manager I will be announcing our graduating interns for JP Morgan Chase. I want to thank the opportunity to thank Chase for hosting our interns and providing this amazing opportunity for them.....
Please tune into your screen to see the graduates appear on screen.

6:36 PM | CALL TO ACTION - ALONDRA PASTRANA

Ashley: Next, I would like to introduce another one of our peers Alondra Pastrana

Alondra: Studies have shown that the people in your age group who did not experience life altering trauma absolutely had an advantage over you. While the human brain was focused and in survival mode, the group that did not experience trauma were free to grow and develop. Although I faced such traumatic experiences in my life at such a young age, standing here and speaking to you all today and telling my story on how I was able to overcome every obstacle when many doubted me is in fact the "American Dream" or as I like to refer to as "Mi Propia Historia".

I would've never imagined being given such an amazing opportunity let alone be given a chance to learn and grow as an individual. It's definitely been a bumpy road, but I wouldn't change a thing because these experiences have made me the woman I am today. My Mom is my biggest motivator, the strongest woman I know. I know my mom was hard on me growing up, but I know it was all for the best. I would also like to thank YearUp for this amazing opportunity and all the staff who helped/supported me when I needed to get through the year. A huge shoutout to the best mentor and coach John Cranberry. He never gave up on me even when times got tough but nonetheless John seen the potential in me and always pushed me to strive for greatness.

Although my journey doesn't stop here, this is just the beginning of a new chapter. My plan after this internship is to continue my studies and pursue a career in something that I enjoy, travel the world and give back to the community – give to the community that made me the person I am today and destroy the stigma that a city kid can't or won't be able to succeed based off their upbringings. No matter what your story is, you can create your own.

The crisis in this country around racism and racial inequity combined with the disproportionate impact COVID-19 has had on communities of color makes closing the Opportunity Divide more important than ever. It will take all of our collective efforts to change the narrative and eliminate the systems and practices that allow inequality and injustice to persist. If each one of you commits to supporting us in some way tonight, you can ensure that Year Up can continue to move young adults from minimum wage jobs to meaningful careers in just one year.

Tonight, our goal is to raise \$2,500. With your support Year Up can continue to positively impact the lives of Opportunity Youth in Chicago. To make a donation, please visit the link pinned at the top of the chat. As you can see, your gift will go a long way in helping future students achieve their very best. Thank you for your support!

6:40 PM | ALUMNI SPEECH - TYME ANDERSON

Dalila: Congratulations, graduates! And now, I'd like to introduce Tyme Anderson, Year Up Chicago Class of 2018 alum, who will lead us in the official Year Up Alumni Oath. You'll find a postcard with the text of the oath in your graduation box.

Tyme: Thank you, Dalila and hello Year Up graduates, family and friends! My name is Tyme Anderson and I am a proud alum from the Class of 2018. First, I want to congratulate all of the graduates on achieving this incredible milestone! One of the great things about today is that we complete this journey as students and start the next one as alumni. (pause)

Year Up has over 20,000 alumni across the country with the power to shape the future. Together, we can make an impact—but it requires each of us commit to lifting while we climb. The Alumni Oath is our vow to do just that. By reciting this oath, you officially join the National Alumni Association, a network of leaders who are advancing in their careers and education, contributing to the success of Year Up's mission, and taking action in the movement to close the Opportunity Divide. Please join me and any alumni that are with us in making that commitment by saying the oath now.

6:41 PM | ALUMNI OATH – YEAR UP ALUMNI

I pledge that as a member of the Year Up National Alumni Association I will continue to uphold and promote Year Up's mission and core values.

I will strive for excellence and realize my potential.



I will use my time and talents to contribute to the success of Year Up, its students, and its alumni.

I will take action in the movement to close the Opportunity Divide.

I take this oath freely, as a promise to lift while I climb, and to be a lifelong ambassador of Year Up.

6:42 PM | ALUMNI ASSOCIATION WELCOME – Janice Lindsey

Hello, I'm Janice Lindsey and I'm the National Director of Alumni Relations at Year Up.

On behalf of all of us at Year Up and the Alumni Relations Team, I'd like to welcome you to the National Alumni Association.

Everything you've done along your Year Up journey has been in preparation for the day you become alumni. And you're now entering the third and longest phase of the program.

As students and interns, you proved that you were EPIC. And now that you are graduates, it's time for you to ACT. The Alumni Relations team and all of Year Up will be here to support you as your Advance in your Career and Higher Education, Contribute to the success of Year Up and Take Action in the Opportunity Movement.

And YUPRO will be here to support you as the primary job placement agency for Year Up graduates. To learn more about resources, services and supports available to alumni, please visit yearupalumni.org.

Today, as you graduate, you join more than 23,000 alumni and we hope that you will remain engaged members of the alumni community. Most importantly, we hope that you will continue to life while you climb.

6:44 PM | CLOSING SPEECH - AARON RAMOS

Hello everyone, I hope you're enjoying the ceremony and having a good time supporting your fellow Year Up graduates, I'm sad that I couldn't be presenting this speech to you in person and not being able to congratulate each one of you face to face. Nevertheless, I absolutely loved every second I got to spend with you during L&D and on internship whether it was time spent virtually over a computer screen or in person. Year Up has been a journey and it's important that we remember everything that we've learned.

When I was signing up for Year Up, I was very nervous. Fresh out of high school and very young which meant little to none work experience. I was worried that Year Up wouldn't accept me because of my lack of business professional skills or lack of

experience, but it was my mom who pushed me to go through with Year Up and “encouraged” me in her own way by arguing and yelling at me that they teach me. Thanks for that ma, I love you.

When I found out that I was accepted into Year Up I was nervous but excited. Excited to learn, excited to have an internship and excited to hopefully come out with a job that I love to do. When I first logged into class it was refreshing and comforting. A lot of you were just like me, we were all trying to make a name for ourselves and trying to start our career.

Thankfully I wasn’t the only one who had no idea what they were doing and tried to fake it until I made it. Most of us were shy and had trouble presenting to a large group of people, some of us had to learn how to use word and excel as well as learning the language of the business professional world. During L&D we laughed and made a bunch of memories together. I had the absolute joy and time of my life watching my classmates grow into the business professionals they were meant to be. We also benefited greatly from our instructors and coaches; they were always asking for feedback on how to improve the program and how to make it enjoyable for future students.

After L&D we were sent off to internship. A lot of us had to say goodbye but we were introduced to new opportunities, new connections and new friends. I hope that we were all able to come out with valuable experience as hopefully a job.

What I like most about Year Up, is that they really care. My coaches Elizabeth and Kivin who were always supportive, also I can’t forget my coaching group, shout out to “The cuties”. Yes that’s our name and a true fact by the way. I also like to thank my ISM Nilda she is always there to support me and always helped to guide me through my struggles.

I’m also thankful for my other interns they made me feel included, so I was never alone, they also gave me advice in what to do for certain situations for example how to talk to my manager and how to network with random people I never met. We always met up occasionally to say hi and have lunch together, and I hope we continue to stick together.

I hope that after this ceremony we remember everything that Year Up has done for us. They provided us with a door leading to opportunities. They gave us everything we needed to succeed. But what does it take to actually succeed? It takes motivated people who are willing to go above and beyond the norm. It takes individuals with intelligence and courage, and those who aren’t afraid to speak their mind and to stand out from the crowd.

I’d like to ask all of you to look to your right now look to your left. Look upon your fellow graduates and learn something from them because every one of us has demonstrated what it takes to walk through that door of opportunity. Everyone put it the blood, sweat and tears it takes to make a healthy career. Now this is our



moment to enjoy, to always reflect and to always look ahead to see what is next? What more challenges can we conquer and overcome.

It is my pleasure to speak to all of you and to say that we made it! And after a year we are finally graduating! You should be proud of yourself! Now it is the time to celebrate! Congratulations everyone, thank you for a memorable year and I wish more success for all of you!