



through school, he earned high grades even as he struggled managing his two learning differences. Even though many students present symptoms of both autism and ADHD, only in the last 10 years has a dual diagnosis become possible with the current edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5).

Shortly before graduating high school in 2020, Ricardo learned about Beacon College through a recommendation from a family therapist. After visiting the Leesburg campus, he decided Beacon would be a good fit to continue his education and pursue a degree in business administration in the hospitality track.

## Ricardo Gonzalez

**Hometown:**  
Clermont, Florida

**Year:**  
Junior

**Major:**  
Business Administration  
Hospitality Track

**R**icardo Gonzalez has his sight set and Beacon's Hospitality Track is laying the foundation for his restaurant idea.

School for Ricardo Gonzalez was always an uphill battle.

But he had a champion in his corner: his mother. A teacher, she managed to help piece together the added support her son needed ever since he was diagnosed with autism and ADHD when he was four.

In 2012, Ricardo, along with his mother and two younger siblings, moved to Florida from Puerto Rico. As he progressed

“As a parent of a child with learning differences, it has sometimes been a difficult journey to ensure Ricardo has received all the educational support available,” explained his mother, Marievy Roman.

Yet, his mother – his chief cheerleader and support network – worried that money woes would derail her son before he ever got on track. Raising



three children on a teacher's salary meant that finances were already tight, so affording college tuition proved a budgeting challenge.

"Beacon College's unique learning model was such an opportunity for Ricardo and without financial assistance, I'm afraid his academic journey and career goals would have ended," she explained.

Thanks to a generous scholarship at Beacon College, Ricardo is a step closer to earning his bachelor's degree and launching his career goals. He became a **Thompson Family Scholar** when he received a \$5,000 scholarship from the **Hugh and Janet Thompson Family Scholarship Fund**.

“When I received the news that I was awarded a scholarship, I was actually relieved about the financial help because of my financial situation,” explained Ricardo, who also juggles his classwork with working at Beacon Dining Commons.

"I would like to say, 'Thank You' [with helping] me further my education as this scholarship is going to good use that best fits my needs."

In high school, Ricardo found some teachers and assignments especially challenging. At Beacon, he's thrived thanks to the college's Triadic Development Model. Through Beacon's distinctive style of teaching and learning support services, his lessons have been more engaging. He thrills at learning about restaurant management, especially classes with Dr. Teri Hunter: "I had a lot of fun with the class and the material was really interesting."

"When I started teaching, my aim was to help students become better people filled with knowledge. Ricardo is the type of student you want in their classroom with a personality that I enjoy teaching. He is very intelligent and eager to learn to better himself as a person and a student," said Dr. Hunter. "Other students gravitate toward his personality, making the classroom full of positive interactions. Ricardo is polite with other students and willing to share his experiences and knowledge within the hospitality and tourism industry."

Ricardo recently added to his hospitality track classes by expanding his degree plan with a concentration in

entrepreneurship, which fits perfectly with his career goals. Since high school, he has hungered to own a hamburger food truck. And in the last year, Ricardo conceptualized his own anime-themed restaurant. With either restaurant concept, he'll be prepared to launch these enterprises through Beacon's business administration program.

While at Beacon, he's expanded his involvement in social organizations by serving as the audio podcasting club president for his sophomore year. He stepped down as president when he stepped up his academic course load but still enjoys participating in a group that wasn't specifically related to his business administration studies.

His success at Beacon has defied the odds. He believes in himself and works hard to achieve his plans. What's next for Ricardo? Getting a job working with food and owning a restaurant. In the long term, he "hopes to work a job or career that makes me happy to wake up in the morning and that it doesn't feel like a chore."

An ambition we all can agree on.