

ETBU and Convención: Scholarships that change lives

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Four years after being told by a school counselor that her family would not be able to afford the cost of enrolling in a university, Kayla Abigail Miramontes graduated recently from East Texas Baptist University with a Bachelor of Science in Professional Studies degree.

“The ETBU scholarship I received through Convención made it possible for me to go to this beautiful private university,” she said. “And my school gave me the opportunity to work on campus to help cover the other half of my tuition. They are so helpful, and were flexible in allowing me to work and study.”

Marimontes was one of the first students to receive the ETBU Hispanic Christian Servant Leadership Scholarship in 2017. The scholarship covered 50 percent of her tuition and full room and board throughout her undergraduate degree. This program is a partnership between ETBU and the Hispanic Baptist Convention of Texas (Convención).

“I had the support of my parents and my church family. I applied for grants and scholarships that I received because I was involved in my community. And my mom even took on a second job to help cover the cost of books and other expenses, she said.”

Marimontes is the daughter of Abel and Esmeralda Martínez.

Remained active in church throughout

college

During her first two years of college, Marimontes returned on the weekends to her home church in Gilmer, Primera Iglesia Bautista, to serve with the worship ministry.

“It’s really hard when you are busy studying, to want to pick up your Bible, especially after reading through eight chapters of school material. But at ETBU we had chapel, I had a good friend group, and Spiritual Renewal Week in the spring was life-changing. It’s tempting to sleep in on Sundays after a long week. But I would encourage students to continue going to church even if you have to go alone.”

Marimontes attended the SHINE Girls Conference in San Antonio during her freshman year of college.

“I remember this young speaker that captured my attention because she was around my age. She shared how to bullet journal, writing down thoughts and prayers throughout the day. I took that and I applied it,” she said. “There were so many thoughts and prayers throughout my college years. I now have at least three full bullet journals that remind me of God’s faithfulness.”

It was on one of her trips back to her home church that she met a young man who had begun attending Primera in Gilmer. Halfway through her college career, they married. But she continued with her studies, and now she encourages others to pursue higher education even if they don’t think they can afford it.

Jesse Rincones, executive director of the Hispanic Baptist Convention of Texas is grateful that schools like East Texas Baptist University recognize the importance of investing in young Latino leaders.

“I have no doubt that their investment will prove to bear great fruit here in Texas and eternal rewards beyond,” he said.

‘Able to draw closer to God’

Other 2017 recipients of the scholarship through ETBU and Convención were Omar D. Aguirre, Sarai A. Muñiz, and José Eduardo Hi.

Aguirre also graduated from ETBU recently with a Bachelor of Arts in Behavioral Sciences degree.

“Thanks to the partnership between Convención and ETBU, I was able to spend the last four years being poured into, both academically and spiritually by amazing professors who genuinely cared about me,” Aguirre said. “I’ve had the opportunity to not only be equipped for the calling God has on my life, but I was also able to grow closer to God through my studies by the Christ-centered education ETBU provides.”

Aguirre did not always aspire to go to college and admittedly lacked motivation as a teenager, but he credits God for the love and grace that drove him to pursue higher education. “

I am in awe of all that God has done in my life in the last four years,” he said.

Aguirre is the son of Silvio Aguirre and Magaly Flores and will be working as a mental health professional in Longview.

‘The gift of a debt-free education’

Muñiz, daughter of Vidal and Areli Muñiz, graduated from ETBU in May of 2019 with a Bachelor of Arts in History degree. She is currently at Baylor University’s Truett Theological Seminary working on a Master of Divinity

degree and will begin working on a Master of Social Work degree from Baylor University this fall.

“The ETBU scholarship through Convención, paired with some academic scholarships, gave me the gift of a debt-free education. This allowed me the opportunity to pursue a master’s degree without the burden of school loans,” Muñiz said. She plans to continue serving through church ministry or a faith-based non-profit.

Jose Eduardo Hi, Jr. graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Religion degree.

“While in high school, I felt the call from God to go into ministry, and he gave me the perfect opportunity through ETBU and Convención,” he said.

Hi is the son of Jose Eduardo Hi Sr. and Olivia Hi. He plans to return to serve in his home church, Primera Iglesia Bautista Alpha in Dallas, and is currently looking for a job opportunity.

Adriana Grace Tapia was a 2018 recipient of the ETBU Hispanic Christian Servant Leadership Scholarship through Convención, and also graduated on May 8, 2021, receiving a Bachelor of Arts in Theater Arts degree with honors. She is the daughter of Josue and Elizabeth Tapia, and plans to work in the San Antonio area.

To learn more about scholarships through the Hispanic Baptist Convention of Texas, visit www.hispanicbaptist.org/scholarships