Kathrynn Gonzalez has been drawn to computers since childhood, but for a while, life took her in a different direction. Earlier, Kathrynn had married, raised three children, divorced, remarried, and worked full time at a bank, all while managing a chronic medical condition. “We were struggling with one income,” she said. “I realized that if I didn’t make changes, we could struggle forever.”

While still working, Kathrynn enrolled at Clark College, Vancouver, WA, and made a commitment to study full time once she transferred to Washington State University Vancouver. Besides wanting a career and a better life, Kathrynn—the first in her family to earn a degree—hoped to set an example for her children.

As a student, she aggressively sought opportunities to learn and to expand her expertise. In her junior year, she received a scholarship to attend the Grace Hopper Celebration of Women in Computing. She interned one summer at ForgeRock, a multinational software company with an office in Vancouver. She volunteered to help first-year students in the computer labs at WSU Vancouver and, as an active member of the student chapter of ACM-W, an organization that supports women in computing, she served as a role model on campus for women in computing.

At age 38, Kathrynn graduated as one of the top students in the WSU Vancouver’s School of Computer Science and Engineering, landing a coveted job at Intel.

Kathrynn also enjoys using her talents for the greater good. At WSU Vancouver, she served on a team to develop a mobile app for children with learning difficulties. She also participated in Intel’s Next Unit of Computing challenge, working on a team to develop a pipeline-monitoring device to detect and prevent environmental disasters. And in 2016, Gonzalez, who benefited from several scholarships herself, volunteered at her alma mater as a scholarship reader, as part of an annual process to review and rate scholarship applications from current students.

Her budding technology career fulfills Gonzalez’s dream. She appreciates the way her job at Intel encourages innovation and continued learning. These are rewards she has realized because going to college taught her an important truth: Only you can take charge of your life and your career.