A former professional baseball player from Jamaica who will go to Princeton University next fall to begin work toward a PhD in engineering. A businesswoman from Japan who quit her job and decided to become a special education teacher. A young man from Brooklyn who was raised by a single mother and is now just two years away from becoming a physician.

These are a few of the remarkable young men and women profiled in our Great Grads salute for 2013. Nominated by members of the faculty, they represent every school and division of City College, and they reflect the broad diversity that is a hallmark of our student population.

They were selected not only because they are academic achievers who strive to excel in the classroom, studio or lab. But also, because of who they are, how they live and how they intend to apply their knowledge and skills. Their stories inspire and truly illustrate the transformative power of higher education.
The most interesting solutions come out of the intersection of different disciplines.

“...The son of immigrants from the Philippines who are both nurses, Joenard followed in their medical footsteps with an engineering twist. He thought about becoming a doctor, but craved the chance for innovation. “The most interesting solutions come out of the intersection of different disciplines,” he said.

Joenard praises the biomedical engineering training at City College. “It helped me become not only technically savvy, but to be able to market an idea," he said. He has taken full advantage of this in his many activities – some of which have spawned products that may go to market.

His team took first place in the Athgo 5th Global Innovation Forum 2013, for which they developed a health- and fitness-promoting app. Another team of which he is a member is a finalist for CCNY’s Kaylie Prize. He also coordinates activities at the Zahn Center for Entrepreneurship and Engineering.

But Joenard isn’t strictly about business. In 2012, he volunteered in Nicaragua as an engineer in an impoverished hospital with the Engineering World Health Summer Institute and repaired aging medical equipment and invented new devices. “I learned that sometimes the most difficult problems have the simplest answers,” he said.

After he graduates, Joenard plans to continue to develop his products and hopes to bring at least one of them to market.
Jun Hashimoto
MA, Special Education

My goal is to work in a school where good teachers are needed.

After a successful career working for businesses in New York, Hong Kong and Tokyo, Jun Hashimoto made a radical career move in 2010. She quit her job with the restaurant supply company she had worked for since 2001 and enrolled in The City College of New York School of Education. "I always wanted to be a teacher, but I didn't think I'd be good enough," the Japanese émigré said. "However, in every company I worked for I moved up into management and had to train people. I realized I liked teaching and helping people. When I was in sales, I wasn't as happy reaching my sales target, as I was when someone thanked me for helping them."

She was inspired to become a special education teacher by reading Torey Hayden's book "One Child," which her mother had given to her. "There are many children who need special education but are not receiving it," she noted. "My goal is to work in a school where good teachers are needed so I'll be able to help the children I deal with."

Jun credits City College for opening her mind to different methods of teaching. "Because of my age, my experiences in teaching were more traditional - a lot of repetitive work and listening to lectures," she explained. "I learned at City College about so many varieties of teaching methods and philosophies you can apply." She added that her professors have been open-minded and allowed her and classmates to freely express their opinions in discussion.

Currently student teaching at P.S. 2 in Chinatown, Jun graduates from City College with a master's in special education this month.
Nothing could keep Veronica Velásquez from fulfilling her dream of becoming an architect; not even a job at a Times Square coffee shop. When she learned there was an opening for her in City College’s Spitzer School of Architecture, she hung up her apron and hopped on the subway to get to the studio on time. “Everybody was already building models, and I didn’t even have a piece of paper,” she recalls.

She caught up quickly, however, and became one of the school’s top undergraduates. Associate Professor Marta Gutman calls Veronica “an absolute delight — a talented, smart, engaging architecture student, who has social justice issues at the core of her being.” Her thesis project is a civic center for Moravia, a lower-income neighborhood situated alongside a landfill in Medellin, Colombia, her hometown. She has also volunteered with the J. Max Bond Center on Design for the Just City.

Veronica’s passion for architecture was ignited in high school back in Colombia. Her father, who moved to Brooklyn, encouraged her to study here. She applied to CCNY and was accepted to the Grove School of Engineering, but she never stopped trying to transfer into architecture.

While professors like Marta Gutman, Alan Feigenberg, Alberto Foyo and Lance Brown taught her much and helped her to see new ways to do things, she says she learned the most from her classmates. “I’m with them 5 – 10 hours a day. They become your professors, your consultants and your family.”

Veronica will spend part of her summer after graduation at the Fontainebleu School architecture program in France. While she currently works for an interior design firm, her long-term interests are in urban planning.