



## Graduate Spotlight: Steven Soto

At age 18, Steven Soto left his family and hometown of Brooklyn, New York, and came to Cleveland with hopes of going into the Kent State University fashion program. But life had other plans for him.

Soto was ready to register when he realized, "I needed to do more growing up before tackling the college life. I just wasn't ready for college." So, he landed a job at a local bank and worked in the mortgage department for nearly eight years.

And then the bottom fell out of the mortgage world, leaving Soto, then in his early 30s, unemployed and struggling with temp work.

"It was a blessing in disguise that I got laid off," he said. "It was just what I needed to get me motivated to go back to school."

At that time, he was working as a temp at Cuyahoga Community College, and he seized the opportunity that was right in front of him – go to school where he worked. He got hired as a part-time academic support services technician at the Westshore Campus and enrolled in courses. He started off part time, but when he discovered he qualified for financial aid, he enrolled full time.

With a passion for fashion and jewelry and a love of computers, Soto decided graphic design was the ideal blend of everything for him. He took his pre-requisites at Westshore and his core graphic design courses at the Western Campus in Parma.

After serving on Westshore student government as president this year, Soto cannot emphasize enough the importance of getting involved. "Tri-C is not just a college – it's a real college with so many student life opportunities," he said. "Embrace the experience of college life, get involved by joining a club or student government. It will open up so many doors for you."



Soto, 35, is graduating with an Associate of Applied Business in graphic design and a certificate in graphic design.

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