**Embracing new challenges**

Isabella Mongalo ’15 is used to facing challenges and tackling them with aplomb. It’s something she’s been doing since she was a kid.

At age 10 Isabella moved to the United States with her mom to avoid political unrest in her native Venezuela. The move was temporary at first, but after young Isabella adapted to life in Miami so quickly—learning English and excelling at school—they decided to stay and take advantage of the many opportunities that a U.S. education would provide.

By the time she was in high school, Isabella’s natural leadership abilities started to flourish. At Miami Beach Senior High’s Academy of Hospitality and Tourism, she took on many challenging roles such as being president of student government and a Florida state representative for the national student marketing association DECA. She was also a member of Future Business Leaders of America, where she competed in public speaking.

“I like to follow my own lead,” she explains. “I love developing exciting projects and playing an active role in bringing them to life.”

When it came time to making a decision about college and majors, an undergraduate business degree seemed like a natural fit. Isabella had always been interested in business; she even played “businesswoman” as a little girl.

“When I found out about the Cornell School of Hotel Administration, I knew it was perfect for me because it merges hospitality and business,” she remembers. “Now my interests fit perfectly into what I’m doing in my classes.”

At Cornell, Isabella is most excited about courses in branding and business development with a focus on the wellness industry. Outside the classroom, she enjoys dancing for Sabor Latino dance ensemble and has spent her time organizing class-wide events as the vice president of finance for the Class Council of 2015. She sits on the SHA Student Advisory Board and forms part of the National Society of Minorities in Hospitality, the Female Leadership in Hospitality club, and the CU Spa Association. Isabella is devoted to serving her sorority, Kappa Kappa Gamma, as vice president of organization. She’s also a Cornell Tradition Fellow, and she works in the SHA Office of Student Services and in the Cornell Public Service Center. Not one to ever slow down, she’s looking into studying abroad during the upcoming year.

Thanks to a generous financial-aid package, affording a world-class college education is one challenge Isabella doesn’t have to worry about—“My biggest concern is to do well and figure out what I’m going to do in my career—not how to pay for my next class. I’m so grateful for the gift I’ve been given. My family always says that we won the lottery. I’m getting an amazing education. I’m constantly being pushed, and it’s always a challenge.”