

# Ingram Scholar Alumni Spotlight



**AMANDA ZIDELL BROWN**, Class of 2008

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/amanda-brown-291809128/>

## **DEGREES**

BA, Double Major: Gender and Ethics in the Workplace & Spanish  
Vanderbilt University

## **CURRENT LOCATION**

Dallas, Texas

## **CURRENT EMPLOYER**

Neiman Marcus

## **CURRENT OCCUPATION**

Fashion Stylist, Neiman Marcus VIP

## **DESCRIBE YOUR CAREER PATH**

I was hired into the Neiman Marcus Executive Development Program in 2008. I worked in the buying offices and followed the merchant track until I relocated to Philadelphia in 2012. In Philly, I was hired by Lagos as an account manager and sales coordinator until my family relocated to California. I became a certified makeup artist and chose to freelance as both a stylist and makeup artist while also working part time as a creative consultant + marketing/sales rep for a Dallas-based jewelry designer. My family and I moved back to Dallas in 2016 where I took a year off to re-calibrate. In 2017, I began freelancing as a stylist and in 2018, I was hired by Neimans as a VIP Stylist which is where I work today.

## **HOW DID THE INGRAM SCHOLARS PROGRAM PREPARE YOU FOR WHAT YOU ARE DOING TODAY?**

I've always enjoyed the psychology, creativity, and evolving dynamics of fashion. I believe in the importance of personal expression and individual representation.

My approach to fashion is similar to how I view the value of a smile. It is in my experience that if you smile - no matter how trying the circumstance - your total self is uplifted.

Clothing for the sake of clothing is inconsequential to me. I find fashion magical as an artistic medium that communicates moods and unites the internal with external in terms of character, priorities, and vision.

There is no greater honor than serving others. My job ethos aligns with my approach to community service because in both cases I seek to do everything I can to uplift, improve, and delight the people who've entrusted their care to me.

The Ingram Scholars Program supported my vision to create meaningful connections through what I felt were opposing interests: fashion + service. I worked hard to create a bridge so my two worlds could co-exist. During my time at Vanderbilt, I often worked with the Magdalene House (now, Thistle Farms) on a program I called AIM for Success: Attitude, Image and Marketing for women recovering from addiction and sex work. As one of the discussion points, we addressed image as it related to professional preparedness. While I engaged in other forms of service at Vandy, I was grateful to know I had unwavering support from Ingram leadership when it came to new ways I wanted to engage in the community. Ingram reinforced my confidence to pursue my passions, no matter what. An exceptional gift to any student.

I continue to incorporate service into my daily life. Professionally, I dedicate a % of my salary to funding service efforts of both personal and client significance on a bimonthly basis. As much as I can, I remain actively engaged in local volunteerism and community leadership. However, my main priority is instilling a love of community and giving back in my three children. We create service projects for each child to invite their friends to participate in age-appropriate efforts to help them begin to see beyond themselves and form a greater sense of purpose.

**IF YOU COULD DESCRIBE THE INGRAM SCHOLARS PROGRAM IN THREE WORDS WHAT WOULD THEY BE?**

Opportunity. Connection. Freedom.

**WHAT DOES THE INGRAM SCHOLAR COMMUNITY MEAN TO YOU?**

Oh goodness. What doesn't Ingram mean to me? This community is a source of constant and diverse inspiration which drives me to dig deeper. Ingram Scholars - past and present - serve as my conscience.

**BEST INGRAM SCHOLAR MEMORY**

I know I'm breaking the rules, but I have a couple.

My first: I was tutoring with an after-school program in a particularly compromised part of Nashville. One of the students we'd often see was walking home one afternoon. As I watched him go, I saw him peek into an empty car with its window rolled down. I saw him lean in and look at the car's contents. After a few minutes, he straightened up, pocketed some change, and continued walking home. This memory has taught me a) don't be quick to judge. I'll never know what motivated this exploration, but making assumptions is not productive b) not everyone has the luxury of a supportive network and/or an environment within which choices can simply be right or wrong c) People walk the line every day in terms of choice. I remember this boy because while it's important for a person to try and stay the course, no matter how many times one might be misdirected, but just as crucial: remembering the community's role and how we all have responsibility to each other.

Secondly, I was on campus as a high school senior for my Ingram interview. My Ingram student host was Stacy Tolos. And, WOW. I wasn't even admitted into the Ingram program yet but after meeting Stacy, I knew I had to find a way in. I was blown away by her energy and passion. I was lucky enough to remain friends with Stacy during our time at Vanderbilt and she was the real deal. The volume of significant impact that Stacy was responsible for was staggering. Her superlative commitment to a better world is a quality I believe all Ingram Scholars share but something about her bandwidth and depth of action was amazing to witness. Stacy set the tone for my lifelong impression of the Ingram Scholars Program.

**WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR CURRENT SCHOLARS WHO WANT TO MAKE THE MOST OF THEIR INGRAM SCHOLAR EXPERIENCE?**

Know yourself, your interests, strengths, and weaknesses. Explore new opportunity but evaluate your experiences honestly so you are sure to find what truly resonates with you. Your peers are spectacular. There is much to be learned from collaboration and friendships but avoid comparison. Remain connected to your love of service and enjoy. Enjoy it so much.