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ENG 1101

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“Success Last Stop on the Education Express”

I grew up in an immigrant family and only a handful of members had graduated from college. For as long as I can remember I have always heard that college and success were related to each other. The notion of college being equivalent to success was frequently brought up at home and in school while growing up. I’ve heard it from family members, mentors, friends, and sometimes even from complete strangers. The saying began to hold more meaning to me as college became a reality, I saw it not only as true but as the key to prosperity.

I first heard the correlation between college and prosperity one night when my mother came home from work late, I was about the age of 6 or 7 and she was complaining about the long hours she had to work. Being so young I did not understand why she had to work so hard when in all the tv shows I watched the mothers hardly worked or didn’t work at all. She explained to me that it was crucial for her to put in extra work in order to provide for my siblings and me because she never graduated college. This further added to my confusion because no other adult I knew at the time went to college and they all appeared to be stable in life, or at least so I thought. My mother went on to explain that just because someone appeared to have their life on track does not mean that they were not struggling. I remember facing my mother and asking “Are you struggling?”. She took a moment to consider her answer and replied stating that she would often have to borrow money and stretch her paychecks just so we could make it to the next pay day. I began to grasp the severity of the situation and in a moment of reflection, my mother confessed

that her life would have been easier had she gotten her degree. This confession was a turning point in my life, it was when I knew I wanted to earn my bachelor's degree and began associating college with success.

In middle school, college and success were always used in the same sentence and the students were encouraged to think about the lives we wanted for ourselves and how college could help us obtain these lives. We always had career fairs, and I heard from many people about different occupations but I was never sure what career I wanted but I knew that I wanted to be successful and not have to live paycheck to paycheck. It wasn't until I started applying to high school in the eighth grade that I felt pressured to know what path I was going to take. During the high school application process, we were required to pick a specialty in law, the arts, business, forensics, or STEM and college seemed like it was much closer. I was uncertain what to pick because I had not made specific plans for my future yet, I just knew I wanted to go to college. To ease my uncertainty, I spoke to my Algebra 1 teacher Mrs. Findley, who encouraged me to follow the STEM route because I excelled in her class. I shared with her that I still had not come up with a plan for my future and she reassured me that I would still have some time in high school to think about it and that my future would be stable as long as I earned my college degree. This was the second time I had someone relate success with college and I took note of this occurrence making sure to relate college as the answer to any concerns I may have about my future. This incident highlighted that higher education was going to be a necessity for me.

To continue, when I transitioned to high school, I felt better knowing that I still had some time to decide what I wanted to do with my future. During my freshman year, I had an advisory class that was strictly college-oriented, where we discussed the college application process, the

importance of college, the structure of a college, and what safety, target, and reach schools were. Before taking this class, I understood that I wanted to go to college and that it was something I must do in order to better my life, but after taking this class the reason for college and how it connects to success became abundantly clear. I learned that college provides specialized learning to teach you the necessary skillsets for your desired career path, and that is why college graduates tend to be more financially stable because they are considered to be professionally trained in their job areas. With this newfound understanding of exactly how college brings success I began to really map out the future I wanted to build for myself, my career path, and my choice of college. Since I was already on a STEM track in high school that I enjoyed I decided that I wanted to have a career in STEM and settled on electrical engineering. I chose electrical engineering because it heavily involved circuitry and circuit designs which was something I loved doing. I made sure to maintain good grades in order to obtain scholarships when I applied to college. This advisory class helped to solidify my beliefs in college being fundamental when it comes to having a bright future. The class explained to me in great detail exactly what college is all about helping me not to see college as more school, but as an institution that prepares you for your chosen job field.

In conclusion, I view education as an essential step up the ladder to becoming successful. The events and people in my life have helped me to view education as important. I first deemed education to be important at the age of 6 when speaking to my mother about the struggles she faced when she informed me that she does not believe she would be struggling if she had graduated college. This idea was reinforced in middle school when speaking to my math teacher Ms. Findley about what should be my specialty in high school, she informed me that my future

would be stable as long as I earned a college degree. After hearing the same thing twice I truly believed that higher education guarantees prosperity, this idea was solidified in my ninth-grade advisory class when discussing the importance of college.