

# EOC Success Stories

## Karson's Story

My family and I live in Cocke County, Tennessee. This county does not have vast resources available to help with higher education. My niece, Karson is a senior at Tusculum College. If it had not been for the help of Terri Hall at the EOC at the Douglas Cherokee Economic Authority and the financial aid help that she provided, Karson would not have had all the opportunities that she has had.

Her dad, suffers from a rare heart condition as well as severe emphysema and COPD. With these health problems, he is unable to hold down a stable job. Because of this, Karson did not have a college fund established. If there was one, it was used for medical bills and the ability to make ends meet. Karson's mother is also unemployed and taking care of elderly parents.

We appreciate all of the help and advice that Terri gave us while Karson was attending college. She was able to do so without being in debt with student loans. Terri would meet with me and Karson as early as 7 in the morning so that I could attend these meetings and still make it to work at my allotted start time. She cares about this program and the students. She and this EOC program are a great asset for the students, families and the communities EOC serves. We need to keep this program alive so more children and adults will have the opportunity to succeed and be great leaders in this society.

Sara Keller  
Tennessee

## Richard's Story

Richard came to Tulsa Community College's EOC shortly after he was released from prison. He was a single father of two and really desired to do right by his children and to reform himself. He obtained his GED while incarcerated and scored over 500 in all areas. Richard worked full time and enrolled full time his first semester at TCC. He proved to be highly intelligent and made the President's Honor Roll his first semester. Richard graduated with honors in paralegal and business administration. After college he began an internship at the public defender's office and he started a nonprofit organization in Tulsa, Oklahoma called "Racism Stinks" and has been active in community service.

EOC Director, Vicki Jones, Tulsa Community College

## Chrissy's Story

Chrissy came to EOC a long time ago when she needed her GED. She tried for years to pass that test and every time, she fell just a few points short. Her Academic Specialist at EOC offered a unique plan to pass that test; to come in once a week and go over those questions that she just couldn't figure out by studying at home.

So, once a week for four months, Chrissy met with her EOC counselor and together they worked through the test. Finally, Chrissy passed the GED and decided to not stop on her educational pursuit. First step, the Certified Nurses Aid (CNA). Chrissy found that she was a natural with taking care of the elderly. For the first time in her life, she had a regular paycheck. But Chrissy wasn't finished yet. Next step, the Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN). To prepare for the entrance test, Chrissy and her EOC counselor met once a week and went over the test in pieces until Chrissy knew the material and was confident in taking the Nursing Entrance Test. Of course, she did great on the test, and was admitted to the program.

Today, Chrissy is a nursing professional that not only loves her job; but is making more money that she ever dreamed possible. She called today to say that her and her husband are closing on their first home next week; to think that when this all started, she was living in public housing.

EOC, Inc. Pennsylvania

## Courtney's Story

My name is Courtney Kellogg, I am from the Kansas City area and I am deaf. I received a cochlear implant when I was a freshman in high school but have always been "mainstreamed" in all my academic experiences. I graduated from Oak Park High School in 2010 with the Gold Medallion diploma, which is the highest offered diploma at Oak Park and the second in the NKC School District. Along with my academic success I was a three-sport varsity athlete. I played golf, basketball, and soccer my freshman, sophomore, and junior year and only basketball and soccer my senior year.

I have received the Presidential Service award for volunteering over 100 hours two different years. After graduating from high school, I went to Truman State University for my freshman year and then transferred to Rochester Institute of Technology in Rochester, NY. At RIT I graduated cum laude in 2014 with a Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Sciences. Currently, I am at RIT getting my masters in Biochemistry and expected to graduate in May of 2016.

While at RIT, I studied abroad in Croatia with nine other biomedical students to learn and experience the difference of the health care systems in the United States and other countries. I was the Secretary of the Health Science and Technology Students Association. I also met many other individuals that are deaf and hard of hearing, learned sign language, and became emerged in the deaf community.

Today, we are seeing a rise in the success of individuals with disabilities. However, when I was in the mainstreamed environment, the schools did not believe I could succeed the way I did. With the aid of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Education Opportunity Center, I was able to go above and beyond the limitations others placed on me with the pre-conceived expectations of a person with a disability. I am excited about my future and I hope that my successes will encourage others with disabilities to recognize what they can achieve. I also hope that my achievements will encourage the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Educational Opportunity Center to help others with disabilities to succeed to their fullest potential as they did with me.

### **Dominique's Story**

Success can be measured in a number of ways. I have received a lot of assistance to get where I am today. When I was in high school I was not an ordinary student but a very self-sufficient student who had to assume the role of an adult. I am not where I am today solely because of what I've done, but also because of the assistance that I've obtained along the way.

During my high school years I worked full time, paid bills and went to school. Misty Chandler and Karen Goose, who were at the time, Metropolitan Community College (MCC) recruiters that came to North Kansas City High School (NKCHS) and made me their "pet project". These ladies extended their hands and hearts to make sure I furthered my education. MCC and NKCHS counselors and teachers motivated me to learn about scholarships that were available not only through my high school but also through MCC. Through their sincere efforts, advice, encouragement and mentoring I was able to gain valuable information that reassured me that a college education and my goals were indeed within my reach.

Before the end of my senior year, I earned a Leadership Grant through MCC. This grant was awarded to students who were not eligible to receive federal financial aid. Another requirement was to show leadership. I participated in numerous activities including debate, DECA (Distributive Education Clubs of America), basketball and community service. As time went on, the Full Employment Council (FEC) helped me to find a job and purchase books for college.

I began working with Jennifer Walk at the Educational Opportunity Center a year after I graduated high school. She assists me each year with completing my Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and referred me to the Kansas City, Missouri Opportunity Scholarship Fund from The Greater Kansas City Community Foundation. I was awarded the renewable scholarship which assists me with books, supplies, and tuition.

Though my educational journey has been a non-traditional one, I was able to overcome many obstacles and eventually complete an Associate's degree through MCC. I am currently pursuing my Bachelor's degree in Information Technology and Business. I plan to go on to receive my Master's and PHD degrees in the future. Overall, success, in my opinion, is measured by the lessons you've learned in life.

### **Theresa's Story**

On June 24, 2017, I attended commencement to receive a doctoral degree in Business Administration. This accomplishment could not have happened without the late Mr. Kenneth DeVitto of the TRIO EOC program. When I met Mr. DeVitto in 1992, I was attending GED school and had a horrible attitude because I did not believe I had a future. I was a high school dropout, single parent, pregnant with a second child. I was on welfare and living in poverty coupled with raising my teenage brother due to my mother's drug addiction. But, Mr. DeVitto did not let that stop him from telling me about his program. He approached me every morning for weeks until I finally agreed to come and talk to him. He helped me understand how to select a career and apply for financial aid. I thought he had worked a miracle because I never thought I could go to college.

In 1996, I graduated with an Associates' degree in Liberal Arts, in 1998 a Bachelors' in Social Work, in 1999 a Masters' of Social Work, both from Wayne State University. I kept Mr. DeVitto informed of my progress and always reminded

him of how appreciative I was of him. He always replied, "I really did not do anything. I was doing my job." I always admired how humble he was because he saved me by giving me a chance to change not only my life but breaking the cycle of poverty that had consumed my family. Simply put, without programs like TRIO EOC those with no hope, no dreams, and no inspiration would be lost and forgotten. It is worth the effort to find innovative ways to save programs that save lives. My success all started with a passionate counselor who believed in the program that he offered.

Last, as a result of my success, my brother who is in his 30's, became a journeyman and now owns a real estate company. My 24 year old son is a general manager at a local restaurant. My 26 year old daughter is attending school to be a nurse. My youngest who is 12 has a 3.5 GPA and is establishing a modeling career. Her dream is to be a surgeon. She said, "I want to be a doctor like my mom even if it is a different kind of doctor." TRIO EOC is more than a service program helping one individual. It is a program that is saturating families with hope, inspiration and with the chance of having their dreams come true. I AM TRIO EOC.

Maxine Hudgins, EOC Counselor  
Detroit, MI

## **Michael's Story**

My name is Michael A. Williams and I am a 51 year old African American first generational male college student currently attending Wayne State University (WSU). TRiO has played a significant part of my academic journey from the very beginning of my post-secondary journey. In 2012, I was introduced to the TRiO Student Support Services (SSS) program at Wayne County Community College District in Detroit, Michigan (WCCCD). The SSS coordinators helped me navigate through my uncertainties and apprehensiveness of returning to school after a twenty-five year hiatus. They were extremely professional and understanding of my concerns.

After making a clear, concise decision to forge forward, the program was available to assist me with academic advising, college tours, personal counseling, tutoring, etc. They also provided exposure to cultural events. The goal was to ensure that I would have a successful transition into a four year institution. In 2014, I graduated from WCCCD with an Associates of Art Degree with confidence that I had been fully equipped to continue on at a 4 year post-secondary institution.

I immediately applied to WSU and was accepted for the Fall 2014 academic school year. One of the first things that I did was sign up for TRiO Educational Opportunity Center (EOC) at WSU for additional support. The professional counselors and staff at Wayne State's EOC was instrumental in my academic success, FAFSA completion each year, as well as, exposing me to potential academic scholarship programs available to assist me financially.

For example, the TRiO Ronald E. McNair Post Baccalaureate Achievement Summer Research Program and the Rising Scholars program. McNair has allowed me to gain valuable research experience. The Rising Scholars program assisted me in mathematics, which allowed me to successfully pass my math requirements. I am forever grateful to EOC for helping me achieve my goals of becoming successful and making a contribution to my local community and society as a whole. Both TRiO programs have helped to change "My Narrative".

Currently, I am the Founder/Project Coordinator of the Professional Closet at WCCCD. The Professional Closet assist post-secondary students with professional attire in preparation for the daily workforce. Additionally, I am an active member of the Men's Leadership Conference and I have the honor of mentoring post-secondary males that are admitted and/or enrolled in community colleges in the State of Michigan.

I graduated from WSU in June 2016 with a Bachelors' of Science in Psychology with a minor in African American Studies. Currently, I am in the WSU Master's Program earning a degree in Counseling Education. Please continue to federally fund the TRiO EOC and the Ronald E. McNair Post Baccalaureate programs nationwide and especially at Wayne State University in Detroit Michigan. TRiO not only changed "My Narrative", but have helped to develop the confidence, skills and networking needed to help me to change others' narrative.

**TRiO IS CHANGING LIVES, NEIGHBORHOODS AND COMMUNITIES IN THE METROPOLITAN DETROIT AREA!**

Mr. Michael A. Williams  
Counseling Educations Masters' Student  
Wayne State University

## **Dzevad's Story**

I am originally from Bosnia. Due to the war in my country I fled the country in 1991. I first went to Germany. My family followed; my parents and my sisters. I come from a very close knit family. In 1993, I went from Germany to the Netherlands. I studied in Bosnia as a construction technician. I also worked in the Netherlands.

I wanted to move to the United States. In 2001, I left the Netherlands and moved to Kansas City. My family followed. I am married with two children ages 10 and 8 years old. Due to my multiple relocations, I am able to speak five languages.

I knew that I wanted to go to college when I came to the United States. I wanted to study engineering. Someone told me about a place in Kansas City where they could assist you with your financial aid. The name of the agency was the Educational Opportunity Center. I first met Mr. Jan Rosenblum in May of 2002. I decided I would attend Maple Woods Community College first and get my Associate's degree. Both my sister and I came in to meet with Mr. Rosenblum. We found him to be very helpful and knowledgeable about financial aid.

While I was attending school, I was also working full time. Mr. Rosenblum was a good motivator and encouraged me that I could do it. I finished my Associate's degree at Maple Woods. From 2006-2008, I stopped attending so I could help with my immediate family, including my parents.

I decided to attend UMKC in 2008 for civil engineering. I will be completing my Bachelor of Science Degree in December 2012. I want to thank Mr. Rosenblum for his support and encouragement in helping me. I also want to thank my family for their support. I look forward to my future.

## **Jean's Story**

At the age of twenty-four I came to Rhode Island Educational Opportunity Center (RIEOC) office after I arrived in the United States. Before my settlement in Rhode Island, I had spent twelve years of my life in different countries as a refugee, including time in the refugee camps in the Democratic Republic of Congo in Africa.

I was fortunate enough to have completed high school education. Nonetheless, there were few opportunities for refugee youths to attend colleges or universities. When I arrived in Rhode Island, my main goal was to attain a college education. However, I had a lot of questions. How could I pay for college? How could I navigate the admission application process?

It was during this time that a friend told me about the RIEOC at the Community College of Rhode Island. RIEOC answered all these questions for me. I met with a counselor, Anthony Carrion. Anthony assisted me with the financial aid application and explained the enrollment process at CCRI. The assistance I received from the center enabled me to complete my associate degree at CCRI and then transferred to a four-year college. Later I obtained a Master of Public Administration degree and came back to CCRI to work with RIEOC as a counselor.

## **Nichole's Story**

As a young single mother of a two year old daughter, Tasia, Nichole Hawk became a participant of Wayne State University's Educational Opportunity Center ("EOC") 23 years ago. Although Nichole was initially uncertain as to what career path she should pursue, she was determined to make something of herself because she wasn't going to allow her daughter to become a "negative statistic".

After several sessions with her EOC counselor, Delta Saulsberry, Nichole enrolled in classes at Wayne State University. While working toward achieving her Bachelor's Degree, Nichole was diagnosed with Crohn's Disease. Despite the physical challenges, she refused to allow the disease to hinder her educational and career goals. Not only was she successful in earning a place on the Dean's List during this same timeframe, Nichole also met and married Tony. In 2007, Nichole obtained a Bachelor's of Art with a major in Sociology and a minor in Psychology.

Upon completion of her Bachelor's Degree, Nichole began pursuing her Master's Degree, in Community Counseling, with a concentration in Agency Counseling. Nichole was inducted into the Golden Key International Honor Society and has obtained her Limited Licensed Professional Counselor.

One of WSU EOC's proudest moments is when Nichole was chosen as the Commencement Speaker for Wayne State University's winter, 2010 Commencement. Since then, she has studied at OptiMind Neuroscience Coaching & Training Institute and has become a Board Certified Mental Health Practitioner in Private Practice. Nichole has volunteered as a Teacher's Aide, a High School Mentor, and Youth Leader at her church.

Nichole has made her dream come true and her daughter is not a negative statistic; Tasia is an intelligent young lady who is a 25 years old in her second year of law school. Nichole is truly a highly motivated young woman who practices what she believes and that is “reaching back and helping.”

Delta J. Saulsberry, EOC Project Director  
Wayne State University

## **Rosemary's Story**

I am a 55-year-old African-American female who recently obtained my Bachelor of Arts from Wayne State University (WSU). It seems all my life I've been somewhat behind schedule. I graduated two years behind my high school graduating class, but I was determined to continue my education. I received an Associate's Degree in Business Administration at Wayne County Community College then transferred to WSU in 1982. My life took a downward spiral and I dropped out due to drug addiction. To make matters worse, the next year I had a son, and was now facing single parenthood.

Seventeen years later, the WSU EOC Program was enrolling participants where I worked and assisting them with educational opportunities. I spoke with Counselor, Linda Fuggs, who reminded me that it's never too late to pursue your dreams. So with her assistance, back to school I went!

Many obstacles presented themselves: fears of inadequacy and delays in progress gave me thoughts of quitting. My mother's death almost paralyzed me. My EOC counselor always encouraged me and kept pushing me forward. Finally, graduation day arrived. It seemed it would never come, but Ms. Fuggs continued to remind me that giving up was not an option.

I graduated with my Bachelor's Degree and my son graduated with his Master's Degree in December 2014. My dreams came true because of the assistance of WSU EOC. Now I am referring others to the program for services.

## **Yusuf's Story**

Life experience has shown me that it is never too late to achieve the highest levels of success while actively pursuing a great vision. My journey began with reconnecting to a long held vision. This vision was the mental image of me as a successful engineer/tech entrepreneur as a 3rd grader. And this image of me as a top professional is what I was able to reconnect with while sitting in solitary confinement during an 18-yr prison sentence.

In the correctional facility library, I found an old dusty college algebra book and an Occupational Handbook. While flipping through the table of contents, I began to rediscover my love for mathematics and imagined a pathway beyond that reality. I completed my GED and later credits toward a high school diploma. Since I was not able to afford college due to President Clinton's ending of the Pell grant or financial assistance for inmates seeking a college education, I began to study college level mathematics over the next 4 years until I qualified for a release. But from my cell, I put together a list of colleges and universities which were some of the top Engineering schools in the country.

I was released August 2003. And in the fall, I officially became a full-time student at Wayne Community College's Pre-Engineering program, with the assistance of the TRiO program and services. I completed my first year with a 3.8 GPA; but I began to feel like I needed a greater academic challenge. I expressed this desire to my TRiO Counselor, Ms. Yolanda Russell and she instructed me to make an appointment to see WSU EOC counselor Ms. Linda Fuggs.

My first semester at Wayne State was a real culture shock. I felt like I was floating out to sea on a piece of ice as I was forced to engage with students, faculty, administrators, student organizations and etc. Each day I began to accumulate questions, some simple and others complicated. It became difficult to adjust when I did not know who to go to for help and/or who to trust. Those circumstances drove me to follow-through with my appointment to see Ms. Fugg's at WSU TRiO- EOC. I was able to push through all the fear and confusion, and make the final transition from student to professional with a past that I knew could possibly hold me back.

From my first set of consultations in Ms. Fugg's office, she gained my full trust, and began the process of assisting with EOC programs. One of my first memories with her was when I was given a career assessment to help evaluate my strengths. To my satisfaction the assessment results confirmed my vision of becoming an Electrical Engineer, and was on point with my natural talents and abilities. My EOC Counselor expressed great interest in me by allowing me to further participate in EOC activities. Within my first year at Wayne State, I was invited to become a member of the Student Leadership Advisory Board (SLAB). Programs and opportunities such as this became a major booster to building me up into the person I am today.

Since graduation from Wayne state University, in 2013, I am so excited to be working on the cutting edge of technology as an Electrical Engineer in the automotive industry, while traveling overseas to work with other engineering professionals in the global market. WSU - EOC has been so instrumental in helping me to carry my Vision...from penitentiary to professional in 8 years.

## Catina's Story

Catina Polk grew up in Detroit, MI, and graduated Wayne State University where she successfully obtained two Bachelors of Arts degrees in the disciplines of Sociology and Urban Studies with a minor in Russian, a Master's degree and is currently working on a PhD in the Sociology discipline. She is a quantitative scholar whose area of focus is racial inequality. In addition, she has been recognized for several accomplishments, within her department, for her research that evaluates the experiences of minorities with the criminal justice system.

Though Catina is an accomplished scholar, her journey of getting to this point was not easy. She's a first generational college student who did not begin her journey until her mid-twenties. Catina gives many accolades to Maxine Hudgins, her TRIO EOC Counselor, for having the opportunity to attend college. It is the efforts of Ms. Hudgins that made her consider and enroll into college. It was then that she was extended an opportunity to become educated through the federal TRIO program.

Upon enrollment, Catina was accepted into the D.C.E (currently titled as APEX Scholars) program. This was an alternative method for non-traditional students to enroll into a 4 year institution. She was originally enrolled through an alternative program (DCE) and immediately showed her potential to thrive as a traditional student. Statistically, a bachelor's degree was the exception, however, Catina has gone against the odds and will soon become a philosophical doctor of Sociology.

Since making the transition, she was awarded multiple academic scholarships and acknowledgements. In addition, she has been the guest speaker at multiple events that highlighted academic excellence and published in multiple articles. These factors are mentioned to make the case that despite the obstacles faced, she has thrived to achieve academically. In short, Catina appreciates TRIO EOC program and is an example of the type of greatness EOC promotes.

She is currently a college professor at Monroe County Community College and encourages her students to fulfill their educational ambitions. She has overcome all of the odds, which indicated that her accomplishments were impossible.

Maxine Hudgins, EOC Counselor  
Wayne State University