Celebrating Success

2018 STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT LUNCHEON

Each year the Educational Opportunity Center (EOC) holds a Student Achievement Luncheon to recognize and celebrate the academic success of our students. The event recognized students that achieved a 3.0 or higher GPA, as well as students that graduated. This year’s event took place on Friday, June 29 at the University of Northern Iowa’s Center for Urban Education. The theme for the event was “Unlock Your Potential”. We were delighted and honored to have Jamie Chidozie, who at the time was the director of the UNI Center for Multicultural Education, as our special guest speaker. Jamie shared her personal educational journey with EOC students and other guests. Throughout her presentation, Jamie took us on a journey from early lessons learned in grade school about race and prejudice, stories of economic challenges and ultimately culminating with her recently being chosen to serve as the director of the newly formed Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Social Justice. Jamie’s message was about perseverance—she encouraged students and guests alike to keep moving forward no matter what challenges they may face.

Two current EOC students also shared their educational journey. Leon Shears shared how making the connection with the EOC program really helped him to overcome the various roadblocks that he faced as he worked to achieve his goal of earning a bachelor’s degree in Social Work. He shared that he started his journey at Hawkeye Community College (HCC) and eventually graduated with an Associate’s Degree in Liberal Arts. His next stop was the University of Northern Iowa. Leon shared that the transition from HCC to UNI was not an easy one. Leon shared that he again looked to his EOC counselor and his counselors in the HCC TRIO office for guidance and assistance with processes and for support. Leon eventually found his stride at UNI and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Social Work this past May. He was happy to share with fellow students and guests that Masters of Social Work program has accepted him for admission. Leon talked about not giving up on yourself.

Elena Rodriguez also spoke during the event. She recently started the Physical Therapy Assistant program at Hawkeye Community College. Elena spoke about getting assistance from the EOC program with starting school and the challenges of being a mom, wife and student. Elena shared that even though it has been “hard”, she thinks that it is worth it.

—Nickole Dillard, Assistant Director
Staff Spotlight

The Educational Opportunity Center welcomes Umaru Balde (Ooh-Mah-Roo Baal-Deh) to our staff as an Educational Counselor. Umaru is originally from Guinea Bissau in West Africa.

He has an Associates of Arts Degree in Liberal Arts from Hawkeye Community College, a Bachelor's Degree in English Literature and a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science. He is currently working on a Master's Degree in Post–Secondary Education at the University of Northern Iowa.

Umaru has previously worked at the YWCA and Hawkeye Community College. His family includes his wife Brittany and daughter Israela. Their family is growing as his wife is expecting a son in October.

In his free time, Umaru enjoys spending time with his family, blogging, and following politics. Umaru is a great addition to our staff and he looks forward to helping people in the community with exploring and pursuing educational goals.

A fun fact about Umaru is that he is fluent in several languages including French, Spanish, Arabic and Portuguese.

You can reach Umaru for an appointment at 319-273-4774.

Fall Fun

With fall right around the corner there’s no better way to celebrate football and cooler weather than a nice bowl of amazing chili! This slightly spicy, smoky and sweet recipe is perfect for the crock pot or is freezer-friendly as well!

Spicy, Smoky, Sweet Chili

Ingredients:
1lb ground beef
1 large shallot or 1 small onion, chopped
2 garlic cloves, minced
Salt and pepper
29oz can tomato sauce
15oz can Bush’s Vegetarian Baked Beans
15oz can black beans, drained and rinsed
3 Tablespoons chili powder
1–2 heaping Tablespoons brown sugar
1 teaspoon smoked paprika
¾ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon garlic powder
½ teaspoon onion powder
½ teaspoon cumin
¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper (or more or less)

Toppings: shredded cheddar cheese, chopped green onions, tortilla chips, sour cream

Directions:
Brown ground beef, shallot or onion, and garlic in a large skillet over medium high heat, seasonings with salt & pepper. Add the remaining ingredients then simmer for 30 minutes, stirring once or twice.

Crock Pot Cooking Instructions: Transfer ground beef mixture to a 5 or 6 quart crock pot then add the rest of the ingredients and stir to combine (can be done ahead of time. Store in the refrigerator until ready to start cooking) Place a lid on top then cook on low for 4–6 hours.

This recipe is courtesy of Iowa Girl Eats, http://iowagirleats.com.

Go confidently in the direction of your dreams.
LIVE THE LIFE you have imagined.
(Henry David Thoreau)
The EOC would like to highlight one of our valuable partners in the community, The House of Hope. The newly constructed House of Hope located at 845 West 4th Street in Waterloo. This agency serves homeless mothers with individualized support and transitional housing to achieve secure families and permanent homes. The House of Hope has a rich history thriving with the generosity from the Cedar Valley; so it was no surprise when what began as a building project quickly became a community endeavor. With the help of over 1,100 volunteers working more than 5,000 hours and the incredible gift from the Dr. Christensen family, the previous building that stood before transformed into 15 apartments, classrooms, computer lab, meeting rooms, and other offices to be used by families and staff. Since the ribbon cutting, House of Hope has taken several families off the lengthy wait list and into a new their new building. If you would like more information visit their website www.houseofhopeccd.org, or follow on Facebook https://www.facebook.com/HoHCV/ or call 319-232-3823.

New Semester, New Challenges
How to balance family, work and school to have a less stressful academic year
— by Umaru Balde

As adults, we can all agree that college can be stressful for every student. Life in general is not easy to manage, let alone if one is a student, parent and with a full time job. Let’s face it, sometimes we tend to “lift more than we can carry” just like I did this summer. I decided to take full time graduate classes, I got a new full time job right before the end of the summer semester when I needed to turn in all my graduate projects and found out we are going to have a baby. These are the moments that I would stand in front of the mirror and say to myself “what’s wrong with you, how are you going to make it through all this?” but luckily I had thought of and got the following strategies which helped me complete my graduate semester successfully.

My strategies of balancing family, work and school are simple. I developed a support system at home. The first thing I always do is communicate with my spouse. I believe that if I have a stress-free home, I can do better at my work and everything else. I let my wife know how many classes I plan on registering for, what days and times my classes are and I find out from my work if there are any days that I will have to work late. We created a shared family calendar so we know each other’s schedule.

My support system at work consists of all my coworkers. The good thing is that the EOC employees already have a shared calendar so that we all know each other’s schedule in case one needs help from the rest of the team. At school, I am always communicating with my professors. If I know that there is no way I can complete an assignment on time, I do let them know ahead of time so we can work it out and I do not lose points and stress out about it.

I chose the right graduate program (this should apply to any college degree) to make sure all my classes are in the evening after work.

One of the most important things to make life easier, is to manage your time. I am used to being involved in many different organizations and activities in the community but I had to learn to be ok with dropping some of my involvements; I had to set boundaries for myself. Instead of giving all my free time to others, I learned to use most of it for myself as part of my self-care time. I use my free time to work out, have some family time or catch up on the events of the day. Mr. Robert Smith reminded us to “work smarter and not harder” and I agree with that idea as long as the work gets done.

Now as you begin this semester, remember that “It is impossible to live without failing at something, unless you live so cautiously that you might as well not have lived at all in which case, you have failed by default.” J.K. Rowling. Don’t let one low grade, for example, define the rest of your semester. Keep on trying regardless of the barriers and ask for help whenever you need it.
The traditional college student is between 18 and 22 years old. For this student, college follows immediately after high school and will last four years, a place to grow in maturity as much as knowledge. The amount of students who follow this timeline, however, has drastically diminished. Now, only 29 percent of the roughly 20 million college students qualify as “traditional.” The other 71 percent—also known as "non-traditional”—are elongating their four years by enrolling as a part-time student or are returning to school after time-off. Instead of four years, it now takes an average of six years to complete a college degree.

But have colleges been paying close enough attention to this shift in student demographics? How do these non-traditional students maneuver college to make their most of their tuition dollars? NerdScholar asked university experts to offer advice on what to expect and how to make the most of college as a non-traditional student.

1. “Education is a marathon, not a sprint.”
So says Eric Chen, Associate Professor of Business Administration at the University of Saint Joseph. While parenthood, health problems, or financial strain may pose significant hurdles to obtaining a college degree, “the important thing,” Chen says, “is to keep your eye on the prize—graduation.”
A lapse in time between education years may also leave students feeling out of place among their classmates and illiterate in the latest technology, however they shouldn’t discredit their decision to take a leave of absence from school in the first place. “The gaps should never be frowned upon, for each learner differs in their approach to their own educational experience,” says Chad Lassiter, professor of Race Relations at the University of Pennsylvania.

2. Don’t discount real world experience.
Time away from school can often give students invaluable perspective and a greater sense of purpose. Many non-traditional students return to school with more defined career goals and a wealth of practical experience, which even “has the potential to help the younger students with their overall growth and development,” Lassiter says. Non-traditional students are capable of discerning what is important and can better envision how their education will transfer over to real-world work.
In general, says Shari Fox, executive vice president of O’More College of Design, “non-traditional students are more focused, prepared, and grateful to be pursuing their educational goals.” Returning to school is a very conscious decision for non-traditional students, arguably more so than other students. They are very aware of education’s costs and subsequent benefits

3. Budget your finances.
A budget is important for every student, but with a greater likelihood of increased expenses, non-traditional students should be especially meticulous about their finances. They also often carry much more responsibility, if not all of it, for tuition costs as compared to their younger counterparts. To start, students should list all sources of income, as well as their household expenses, to understand what type of education they can afford—a reduced course load, for example, can lower costs. Karen Hunt, director of admissions at Wittenberg University, advises students not to overlook any “hidden costs,” such as commuting or child-care costs when drafting up a budget.
If students fall short, loans may be an option. However, Eric Chen warns students to proceed with caution when taking out loans. “My general rule of thumb is that you should only take on debt equal to 1.5x-2.0x your first year’s salary after graduation,” he says.

4. Make time for networking
Between class and a part-time or full-time job, and maybe a family, non-traditional students often have less time to spare for school-related activities. However, if they are able to make room in their schedules for campus involvement, non-traditional students should consider joining student chapters of professional organizations. “By doing so, students have the opportunity to network with their faculty and industry professionals,” Shari Fox says. “They become part of the campus community and gain valuable support for future careers.”
Less obvious opportunities for resume boosters are important to consider, too. Student-led clubs and organizations can be a means to demonstrate leadership and explore interests, which can affect students’ future career choices. And, while these connections may not have immediate results, they could serve students well in the future. On a more basic level, campus involvement and use of campus facilities, such as the athletic facility, provide outlets for stress relief and add to the overall college experience. As Karen Hunt notes, taking advantage of these options allows students to “make the best use of [their] investment in the college.”

5. Take advantage of college support services.
One of the biggest support systems for non-traditional students is other non-traditional students. Connecting with students who have shared experiences will offer solutions and mutual empathy. Beyond students, Karen Hunt stresses that “college campuses are loaded with support services.” The student services and career services center, professors, counselors, and student support groups are good places to start. And, “if a support organization doesn’t exist,” Saint Joseph’s Eric Chen says, “perhaps you should start one!”