



My Journey - Elena Ogbe

As a first-generation student, there were obstacles that were bound for me to face. Questions I had to ask myself early on in my educational journey. What are my goals? Are they obtainable? Can I *actually* do something my parents were never given the opportunity to accomplish? The answers came out as such: I *want* to go to college, I *want* to be a nurse, but I don't have the funds to do so and better yet where do I even start. That was where my mind was as a freshman in high school. After research, I realized college was *very* expensive, more than I had realized, and because of that, I had to work on challenging myself with balancing the life of a high schooler while also taking rigorous courses. I worked hard, preserved, and never gave up no matter how overwhelming my schoolwork would get. However, I could not have done that alone. From 7th grade up until Senior year, I was a participant in Fort Henry Tutoring. They provided academic resources for those who lived in the area and qualified with low-income housing. To this day, I am very grateful for having access to that resource. The reason being that once home there was really no one for me to ask for help.

From Junior year, I was able to transition to the College and Career Readiness program, which was under the AHC. Inc establishment. Their mission was to help students like me, low-income and first generation, to receive resources and support that was needed in order to succeed during the college application process. From this program, I was able to build a relationship with my mentor, attend workshops that explained the application process, and become connected to my fellow peers who were in the same position I was in. I felt supported, understood, and considerably less overwhelmed as I knew there were people from who I was able to seek guidance. My mentor, Zanyab Malik, helped me to understand how to form a college essay, enhance my editing skills, and feel confident in all the applications I submitted, for both college and scholarships. As a senior whose ambitions were to succeed in attending college, I was tasked with maintaining my grades in rigorous courses, applying to colleges, applying to scholarships, navigating financial aid, amidst adapting to online school. It was overwhelming. I have full confidence that without the support College and Career Readiness had given me that I would not be where I am today. An undergraduate student at James Madison University, aiming for a Bachelors in Science of Nursing and Minor in Honors Interdisciplinary. I have dreams I am striving to accomplish and because of this program, I was propelled into college life with confidence that I will succeed.