

Tamika N. Norton

FALL Semester 2013

Life after High School

Voices Of VSU (VOV) #1

I am a non-traditional student at Valdosta State University studying sociology. I plan to graduate with my bachelor degree May 2014. College was a tough decision to make and is a challenging journey to complete but the process is very rewarding. I graduated as a Valdosta High School Wildcat in 2002 and shortly after I chose marriage life over college. I have been married for 11 years and have five beautiful kids. The work I desired to do and was passionate about was not compatible to my educational background so college was my only option. Spending a great deal interacting with my own family, families in my neighborhood and people at my church awakened my love for family and community; "I just have a pure love for the social well-being of people, families and community.

During my High School Years, I was uncertain about what I desired to do and really did not take education seriously, although I was well-capable. Because of "life" and personal struggles my motivation to grow and succeed deteriorated. My original plan was to go in the military as a ticket out of my, as I thought at the time, bad conditions but I believe God led me in a different direction. During the time I was not in college I spent it committed to building my own family. I believed I grown a strong sense of who I was but I learned that college was necessary for me to grow more and do what I love and was created to do.

I must admit, college is very stressful in the beginning and many times I wanted to quit. In the beginning I was struggling with the habit of lack of discipline with learning. College requires a lot of reading and comprehending of information that I was not exposed to on an everyday basis. Looking back on my freshmen year up to now as a senior I can definitely see growth and change. For a student that entered in college with less than a 3.0 high school grade point average, I think I am an example that with determination and effort anyone is capable of succeeding. I have made so many excuses that now I see that excuses only made me miss out on greater opportunities. The excuse of me waiting too late because of lack of educational interest, feeling intellectually incompetent, too old, and just generally feeling unprepared for college made me feel like I was not college material. I can humbly and proudly say that I have maintained a grade point average greater than a 3.0.

Here are some advice I would like to share with anyone that chooses to go to college?

1. **Value Education and Learning.** This advice may seem strange to a person that is choosing to go to college but it is definitely possible to participate in something and not value it. Value can be seen as treating something at a level in which it is respected or viewed meaning see the course as an advantage. Do not be a student that just goes through courses not aiming high in course work. Also I think it is very important to grasp the information taught so that you can personally

and professionally grow. My motto as I studied was I do not want to graduate from college lacking the knowledge and skills that I learned in class.

2. **Be strategic.** Every course you take should be for the purpose of reaching your goal. Consistently evaluate weaknesses and strengths and use college courses as ways to grow in weaknesses and strengthen weaknesses. I definitely believe I have elevated in my writing skills but did not put as much effort in public speaking. I took keyboarding, communication, and public administration courses to develop professionalism. Also I instead of hastily choosing courses within my major I chose courses over topics I wanted to grow more knowledge in.

3. **Support System.** I can't credit myself for maintaining determination and motivation for finishing college. As a none-traditional student I believe it was easier for me to avoid networking with other college students but I learned it was necessary to get numbers from others so I can ask questions about things I did not understand. Different people were able to direct me on certain assignments I found difficult. Sometimes we learn the most from other people who have more experience in certain areas. I definitely have learned good research and critical thinking skills by interacting with other students. A good support system will always push you towards growth and development. Outside of finding a circle of support in college, it is also necessary to surround yourself around people that are purpose-driven and supportive. Having a lot of support from my husband church family and friends has made my college journey a lot easier.

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