

U.S. Department of Education Community College Summit  
Ivy Tech Community College  
Indianapolis, Indiana  
March 23, 2011

**LEIGHTON CLEMONS**  
**Chicagoland Regional College Program**  
**Student Testimonial**

Growing up, I always knew that skipping college was NOT an option. My father always stressed how important school was and made sure it was my number one priority. I knew that I would not be able to attend any activities if I didn't do well in school and for that I will always be grateful to him. To this day, my father stands behind me 100 percent. He helps me make class choices and is a tremendous motivator.

During the last few months of high school, I had planned to attend Eastern Illinois University with my best friend to major in education. We planned to room together, play football together, and complete college together. We both were accepted and thought we were on our way but we did not have a plan to PAY for college. I applied for financial aid, but all that was available to me were loans. I was not willing to be 60 thousand dollars in debt after finishing college. THERE HAD TO BE A BETTER WAY! During the last few weeks of high school, I received an email from my aunt introducing me to the Chicagoland Regional College Program. I was invited to an open

house for a program that payed for college, offered a part time job, housing assistance, and more. I told my father about it and we attended the open house.

I WAS CERTAIN IT WAS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE! Let me get this straight... All I had to do was work 20 hours a week which put money in my pocket; go to school and do well which benefits me; talk to a site director once a month who keeps me on task; And the program would send me to college for free? Nooooooooooooooooooooo way was this possible!! I asked all types of questions to try and find the flaws in the program. THERE WERE NONE. I successfully completed the applications and interviews for CRCP and UPS and was admitted into the program.

A few short weeks after high school, I started work at UPS. I chose the night shift, 10pm to 3am, which took a little getting used to, but wasn't as hard as I had imagined. In high school, I had been a professional procrastinator, but working nights at UPS mandated a change. Getting off at 3am, meant all homework and studying would have to be completed before leaving for my 10pm shift. I became a planner.

August 2008, after working the summer at UPS, I began classes at Moraine Valley Community College as a part-time student. By taking a lighter class load, I would better position myself to be successful in class AND on the job. In the

beginning, it was tough trying to balance school, work, studying, and a personal life, but as time went on, it became a way of life.

Five months ago, I was promoted to supervisor at UPS, where I supervise eleven people. Through hard work, dedication, and gaining the respect of the employees in my area, my area became one of the TOP PRODUCING ones in the facility. **THINGS ARE GOING GREAT!**

In addition to attending Moraine Valley and working at UPS, I observe students at Coolidge Elementary School in Phoenix, Illinois, twice a week. As a result of my effectiveness with students and staff, I have been asked to become a tutor. My experience at Coolidge has been eye-opening both personally and professionally.

I honestly believe the younger generation needs guidance particularly from men who can serve as positive role models. I received a quality education as a young student and I believe the future generation deserves the same chance. **I WILL NOT GIVE UP ON A STUDENT!**

As a result of my experience at Coolidge, I have chosen to become an elementary school teacher. My desire is to teach in a challenging environment similar to Phoenix

where the poverty rate is 39% higher than the state average and 32% of children live below the poverty level. I BELIEVE THAT I CAN BRING ABOUT CHANGE; WITH TIME I BELIEVE THAT CHANGE IS POSSIBLE.

Everyone needs a little fun! I never gave up on my football dream so I play semi-pro, practicing twice a week. Managing it all is tough at times but I feel that it all is playing a role in my success.

I am now in my final semester at MVCC. I will earn an Associate in Arts degree in Elementary Education in May 2011. I will graduate without ANY DEBT because of my hard work through the CRCP opportunity. I plan to continue my education and earn my bachelors degree at Chicago State University and become a teacher.

The CRCP has been great to me. IT HAS HELD UP TO ITS COMMITMENTS 100 PERCENT! I am better prepared for my future because these experiences have shown me that there will always be more than one element to life. My time management skills will only get better as I progress and will prove essential in my ability to maintain balance in my life. Over the last few years, I HAVE LEARNED A LOT ABOUT MYSELF. I LEARNED THAT I AM A LEADER. I AM ABLE TO

ACOMPLISH ANYTHING, AND I WILL NOT LET FAILURE BE AN OPTION  
BECAUSE I HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO BE SUCCESSFUL!

Five years from now, I plan to have my bachelor's degree, be established in my career as an educator and setting my sites on my master's in education to further my career.

This program is needed to give a chance to students that may not be able to afford college but are willing to work their way through. Without this program, (and I know of no other like it,) some students will give up on their education goals. A college education IS part of the American dream!

HARD WORKERS DESERVE A CHANCE!