ON GOING TO COLLEGE

“Growing up I knew that I was smart, and I had seen the struggles of my grandparents who didn’t get the privilege of going to college. And so I saw college as a fix that would break the cycle of financial struggles we experienced. I am very glad I was able to go to college because I’ve had so many life-changing opportunities and have a much brighter future and chance of success because of it.”

ADVICE

“Just do it! College is worth it! At least just try it even if you think it’s not for you. I guarantee that you will find something or someone that makes it worthwhile. There are plenty of resources out there to help you see through college. For example, I haven’t paid anything since I’ve been at college, and I’m pretty much doing everything on my own so if I can do it you can do it too!”

LESSONS LEARNED

“I wish I knew how long the financial aid process took, especially if there were errors. I wish I knew how difficult it would be to manage a job while going to school because it is quite difficult. But thankfully I’m managing well now. And the resources! I was doing everything on my own, and I needed help and so I utilized the resources made available to me.”

EXPERIENCES

What has been your experience as a first-gen college student?

“It’s hard. It’s very hard. I went to a privileged high school, and my friends had all the things that weren’t really available to me (nice cars for their birthdays or whatever it may be). They had the moral and financial support towards college that I wasn’t able to have. I didn’t know anything about financial aid or much else, and my grandparents couldn’t help me because they didn’t have knowledge on college or technology. So it was quite hard, but I was able to get through it.”

What have been some of your most favorable moments?

“I got to study abroad in Paris for 35 days. I was able to travel to the south of France, Venice, Amsterdam, and Euro Disney, and I did a lot of things I never thought were possible. I am so thankful because this was my first flight ever, and it was like ten hours across the ocean. It was the first time I had ever been on a plane. I never thought this was something that I’d be able to experience, and I am very glad I had this opportunity.”

What have been some of the less favorable moments?

“Financial aid was horrible. The social security office got my birthday wrong so my financial aid was never processed correctly, and I had no one to help me so that was tough.”

ADDITIONAL REMARKS

“Join FGO - come to FGO meetings! We started the First-Gen Owls club about a year ago, so take advantage of your resources. I didn’t know about the writing center and all the other campus resources, for instance. So yeah! Join FGO, go to college, and take advantage of all your resources!”

This is part of the Spotlight series created by the First-Gen Planning Committee.

If you are a first-generation student, faculty member, staff member, or alumni interested in being interviewed, please contact Jayne Chukwudinma, Graduate Intern for Cultural & Community Centers, at jchukwu1@students.kennesaw.edu.

FIRST-GEN INITIATIVES AT KSU

firstgen.kennesaw.edu

SPOTLIGHT: MADELEINE CARDEN

Madeleine - our first student spotlight - is a second-year Nursing student here at KSU. She currently serves as Operations Chair for First-Gen Owls (FGO), KSU's first-gen student organization.