

Producing Radio Documentaries and Podcasts: EOF Script

(Opens with the song “I Can” by Nas, crossfading out)

I know I can, be what I wanna be

If I work hard at it, I’ll be where I wanna be

I know I can (I know I can)

Be what I wanna be (Be what I wanna be)

If I work hard at it (If I work hard at it)

I’ll be where I wanna be (I’ll be where I wanna be)

I’m Keri Ann Flacomio, and I’m Elyse Toribio, for WRPR News.

There’s an office tucked away on the first floor of D-wing. If you’re in a rush, you might miss it, but if you’re one of the 340 EOF students at Ramapo College, you know exactly where it is. Since the school’s establishment in 1969, the Educational Opportunity Fund Program has given prospective college students from underprivileged communities access to a quality education and a lifelong mentorship.

In the midst of recent ongoing debate over budget cuts in higher education, those whose lives have been shaped by the EOF Program at Ramapo over the years are fighting to ensure that future students have the same opportunities that once put them on the path to success.

Carolina Perez, student development specialist and former EOF student, explains just how important the program is to young students.

Tape: Perez (3:05-3:25 ... 6:18-6:28)

Runs: 33 secs

Outcue: “hold for them”

“I think that a lot of our students use education as a social mobility tool, and to reach their dreams and their goals and they’re right, so I think that it’s a wonderful program, which provides a lot of students, to accomplish what they set out for ... I think, it provides students with, not only motivation, but with a realistic view of what the future may hold for them.”

As a student in a gifted and talented high school in Newark, New Jersey, Dr. Daniel Jean, Director of the Center for Academic Advising and First-Year Experience at Ramapo, always had the potential to be an exceptional student, but it took the push and encouragement of a Ramapo EOF recruiter to get him on the right track.

(Natural sound from the Center for Academic Advising and First-Year Experience office fades in, continues throughout interview and fades out)

Tape: Jean (3:40-4:06 ... 4:13-4:22)

Runs: 35 secs

Outcue: “in the program”

“The EOF recruiter who came to my high school during my senior year, looked at my transcripts and told me he was disappointed in my grades, and I had never met him before. I remember going back to my friends and making jokes about him, and feeling really taken aback by his approach. But he kind of set the tone for me to strive for excellence and to do well in college ... That was just impactful because I think he cared, he recognized that I had potential and he challenged me without even knowing me, and I think that provided the foundation for me to do well in the program.”

Tape: Toribio (4:22-4:24)

Runs: 2 secs

Outcue: “here, now”

“Do you see yourself playing that same role for students here, now?”

Tape: Jean (4:24-4:26)

Runs: 2 secs

Outcue: “Absolutely”

“Absolutely.”

For Nicole Pacheco, assistant director and career advisor at the Cahill Center, a college education was never really something she intended to pursue — due to academic and financial disadvantages — until she learned about the EOF Program and was encouraged to apply.

Tape: Pacheco (0:36-0:41)

Runs: 5 secs

Outcue: “within my reach”

“No one had ever spoken to me about college, it was just, it didn’t seem within my reach.”

Tape: Toribio (1:56-2:03)

Runs: 7 secs

Outcue: “was that like”

“When you were in high school, what was that feeling like when you kind of learned about this program, you saw you had the opportunity to go to college, and it was something you hadn’t really considered before, what was that like?”

Tape: Pacheco (2:05-2:06 ... 2:17-2:25 ... 8:40-8:59)

Runs: 27 secs

Outcue: “me I think”

“I think it have me hope ... Now I realize that if it wasn’t for EOF Programs in general, I wouldn’t have been able to get admitted into a college because my SAT scores were too low ... You know, if it wasn’t for my school counselor talking me into that and then someone actually accepting me I probably would’ve stayed home and just, you know, worked in retail or, you

know, I was working at McDonald's at the time, and not that there's anything wrong with that, but that would've been it for me I think."

Junior Sabina Ulysse, a current EOF student, recognizes all of the advantages and opportunities that the program provides.

Tape: Ulysse (0:00-0:14)

Runs: 14 secs

Outcue: "family on campus"

"It's been very beneficial to me, like financially, emotionally. You have mentors that help you with questions and concerns. You know, it's like a family on campus."

Tape: Flaccomio (0:02-0:15 ... 4:15-4:20)

Runs: 18 secs

Outcue: "by these opportunities"

"I'm here talking with Lorne Weems, director of the EOF Program at Ramapo College, in an office that showcases student opportunity and achievement, where the walls and tables are covered in photographs and awards, and the atmosphere is welcoming and optimistic. ... What kinds of doors does the EOF Program open for students and how do you think their lives have been impacted by these opportunities?"

Tape: Weems (5:26-0:59)

Runs: 34 secs

Outcue: "breaking the cycle"

"Once you get your college education, it just opens up a new world. And for our students, many times, it kind of ends the cycle of poverty that may have, existed in their family. Many of them are first-generation college students, so I tell students all the time that, if you're an EOF student and you graduate, more than likely your children will not be EOF students, okay, so you're essentially breaking the cycle."

In order to keep breaking that cycle, Weems, Perez, Jean and Pacheco offer advice to former, current and future EOF students to help them achieve success, despite looming state budget cuts in higher education.

Tape: Weems (7:33-7:34 ... 7:40-7:52 ... 7:55-8:03)

Runs: 21 secs

Outcue: "here to them"

"Give back ... You don't owe EOF anything, you know, you don't owe Ramapo College anything, you don't owe the state of New Jersey anything, but you do owe your community that you come from ... so I always tell students, all the time, go back to your community, and offer some of what it is that you received here, to them."

Tape: Perez (7:57-7:58 ... 8:09-8:25)
Runs: 17 secs
Outcue: "give back"

"An important advice is to give back ... to give back by teaching others and mentoring others. Just the same way someone helped them, give back."

Tape: Jean (8:39-8:50)
Runs: 11 secs
Outcue: "have amazing longevity"

"Just remain active, it's a lifetime membership, and I think that, you know, it's truly a family, and if students can recognize that from the beginning, and the historical perspective, I think the program will have amazing longevity."

Tape: Pacheco (13:07-13:34)
Runs: 27 secs
Outcue: "a wonderful opportunity"

"I think at the end of the day, you know, it's a state-funded program. The governor can turn around one day and just say, 'We're doing away with EOF,' which would cut thousands and thousands of college graduates out of the conversation. So I think just to be humble and know — not to look at it in a way where, you know, you don't deserve to be in college, so you wouldn't have been accepted, but truly look at it as a wonderful opportunity."

Cutting funding for a program such as EOF threatens the growth of kids in disadvantaged education systems, who have the potential to do more.

Tape: Jean (0:00-0:11)
Runs: 11 secs
Outcue: "saved my life"

"We're coming from these impoverished neighborhoods where it's not a lot of opportunity and access ... I always say this jokingly, but I, there's some truth to it, I think EOF kind of saved my life."

Over the past 18 years, Dr. Jean has fulfilled his promise to stay connected to the EOF Program at Ramapo, and will stay true to his roots in his new position as the executive director of EOF and Academic Development at Montclair State University.

(Fades into music from the song "I Can" by Nas, crossfading in and out)
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