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When I graduated from high school I had every intention of moving straight into the work force, without a second thought on attending an institution of higher learning. It was only by unplanned and even more unexpected turn of events that I found myself attending Broward College. While in my first semester, I was exposed to a world that I had never known in high school. It was a world full of endless possibility rife with thought provoking professors who made a permanent change on my naive mind. Learning suddenly became addicting. I was enthralled with the books, the lectures and even sometimes, the assignments. I discovered the importance of knowledge and why it’s considered synonymous with power. It was here that I became a member of the International Honor Society Phi Theta Kappa, where I volunteered my time at clothing drives as well as mentoring incoming freshman.

I attempted to capitalize on this by transitioning to the University of Central Florida after obtaining my Associates Degree. Unfortunately, this was not an easy transition as my mother became ill following my graduation from Broward. I decided to delay my move to Orlando and stay in South Florida and attend Florida International University for a semester while working and helping my mom recover. The saying “easier said than done” definitely rang true in this situation because to say I struggled would be an understatement. I dropped 4 of my 6 classes and only managed to pass Biology and the lab component with a C. I found it very hard to rebound from this and struggled to get back on track for seemingly the rest of my college career.

However, my efforts were not wasted while I was at UCF. I became involved in research, specifically the Student Research Academy and the UCF NanoScience Center, where I assisted students and professors alike in making nanoparticles. I also participated in directed research with a distinguished sociology professor Dr. Sikorska. Together we compiled data on US medical schools and their implantation or lack thereof, of Palliative Care Education in the curriculum. Our research was accepted by the Gerontology Society of America for presentation in New Orleans, LA and it was here that we presented our findings at the Annual Scientific meeting in 2013. Additionally, I was honored as the recipient of the John L Mica scholarship for public service. I took on more mentoring duties and participated in the STEM mentoring program and received a silver tier award.

While in school I also found my way into the health care field through pharmacy. Even though I had no background in pharmacy, I was able to convince CVS pharmacy to hire me without any experience and ultimately learn through the board certified program provided within the retail chain. I was able to obtain my license and national certification, working in the industry for 6 years, both in retail and clinical settings. I successfully made a name for myself in the pharmacy world but my heart remained with medicine. Acquiring the Certificate of Health Sciences at University of South Florida would be the catalyst to set my future ablaze with success and open more doors with opportunity welcoming me on the other side.