**VOCATIONAL SCHOOL 103 FINDING THE RIGHT PROGRAM**

**FROM THE DESK OF THE DEAN**

**LET’S FIND THE RIGHT PROGRAM**

**TOPIC 1**

Marcus Robinson and Aja Morales could have their pick of several prestigious four-year universities. The high school junior’s from Chicago and Oakland are members of National Honor Society, earning A’s taking 4 plus honors and AP courses and very capable standardized test takers.

Naturally, a top-notch private college, an elite public university, a prominent HBCU or maybe even an Ivy is the next logical step for Robinson and Morales.

Wrong. Both stellar students decided that the path each wanted to choose was a vocational/trade school to train for a career that utilizes their hands on expertise while having the opportunity to create his and her own business with limited funding.

To many parents, teachers and administrators, a decision like this would come as a surprise. But when you step back, throw conventional norms aside, and take a close look at the rationale for choosing a two-year technical or trade school education over that of a traditional four-year, it’s a decision that actually makes perfect sense.

*Traditional College versus Vocational School's*

**Four-Year College Costs Continue Rising**

Tuition, fees and housing at colleges and universities continue to rise. The rates of those increases at Public Schools is growing at a lower rate than Private Institutions but the overall costs put so many students in debt without an assurance of a job or skills that afford each student an opportunity to work in his or her field of choice.

**“Four-Year” Colleges in Name Only**

While “four-year” is the typical way traditional colleges and universities are described, the truth is that students are taking more than four years to earn their undergraduate degree, and many don’t graduate at all. The numbers show that just over half of the entering freshman class at traditional colleges and universities earn their degree, with many of them taking five or even six years to do it. And more than 40 percent aren’t graduating at all. So while the annual net costs of attending continue to rise, the number of years it takes to graduate also is climbing increasing the overall cost of attendance—which means more money out of your family’s pocket.

**A Mountain of Debt**

Students leave traditional colleges and universities buried under a mountain of debt. These staggering student loans are another reason a shorter, focused vocational education is so attractive. With a current burden of $1.48 trillion spread among 44.2 million Americans, student debt has reached an all-time high. The average four-year student carries a burden of $33,484 in debt upon graduation, paying a little over $351 a month, for 10 years. And 20 percent of four-year degree grads owe more than $50,000.

*The case for a vocational/trade school program…*

**Focused Education and Training**

While students at four-year colleges and universities pay big money to attend classes that have nothing to do with their majors, trade school students take only the courses they need to enter their career field of choice. And trade schools are constantly re-evaluating their program curriculum, working directly with business and industry to ensure students are acquiring relevant skills that can be applied to day-one after graduation.

You’ve seen the research. There’s no denying the reality that it is, in fact, a brave new world when it comes to higher education. A world where students have a viable, logical path toward rewarding careers that don’t involve the wasted time and money of four-year colleges and universities.

**TOPIC 1**

**DISCUSSION QUESTION 1**

Based on your desires – location, climate vocational interest, please do some research and find 3 schools you would like to attend. Name all 3 and explain the strengths and weaknesses of each based on your research on line and phone calls with staff from each school.

**DISCUSSION QUESTION 2 with the Dean**

**PLEASE SET UP A PHONE CALL OR ZOOM CALL WITH THE DEAN FOR 15-30 MINUTES.**